
An illustration at the top of the cover shows two men in 19th-century attire. The man on the left has a mustache and is looking towards the center. The man on the right is holding a rectangular object, possibly a book or a tablet. Between them is a large, rounded glass vessel containing a baby. The background is a textured, light blue-grey color.

*the* MIND of  
*the* CHILD

*Child Development in  
Literature, Science, and  
Medicine, 1830–1900*

A large illustration on the left side of the cover shows a baby curled up inside a large, rounded glass vessel. The vessel has a narrow neck and a stopper. The baby is positioned in the center of the vessel, with its head and limbs visible. The illustration is rendered in a fine-line, engraved style.

SALLY SHUTTLEWORTH

# THE MIND OF THE CHILD

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THE MIND  
OF THE  
CHILD

CHILD DEVELOPMENT IN  
LITERATURE, SCIENCE, AND  
MEDICINE, 1840-1900

BY  
SALLY SHUTTLEWORTH

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For my parents, Barbara and Kenneth Shuttleworth, and  
my daughters, Becky and Katy

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This is an 'old-fashioned' book in a fairly literal sense. It has been fashioned out of months spent working on dusty, crumbling tomes, in ill-lit basements all over the UK. Such uncomfortable, though deeply satisfying, research will



no doubt very shortly become a thing of the past. I note, as I make my final revisions, that many of the periodicals I worked on are now available online. References that took weeks of toil can now be unearthed at the click of a button. My thanks are due to staff at innumerable libraries, but particularly the British Library at Boston Spa, where I was allowed into the stacks, the Leeds Library, and the Bodleian Library and in particular Wilma Minty.

I have completed *The Mind of the Child* in the year my youngest child turned 18—I can but hope it did not consume too much of my daughters' childhood. Despite the best of intentions I never completed baby or child diaries, and I offer this book to my daughters, Becky and Katy, as a very pale substitute. I note in the text the contrasting meanings of the term 'child'. Whilst one can leave childhood behind, one always remains the child of one's parents. This book is also dedicated to my parents, in gratitude for their unstinting love and support. Finally, I wish to thank John Christie for his emotional and practical support, stern critical eye, and intellectual companionship.

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# *List of Abbreviations*

ODNB    The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography  
OED     Oxford English Dictionary

# Introduction

We live in an age fascinated by childhood. Newspaper articles and television programmes debate on an almost daily basis the importance of early training, whilst ‘early childhood studies’ flourish in university education departments, and ‘babylabs’ have become an essential component of any Experimental Psychology programme. Such academic interest is an index of more broadly based social concerns. Fear of the feral child, as a threatening, animalistic presence, is counterbalanced by an equally deep-seated fear that we are depriving our children of a proper childhood.<sup>1</sup> Childhood, we are repeatedly told, is ‘disappearing’, whether through the pressures created by our examination and educational systems, the emergence of the sexualized child, or the loss of imaginative play.<sup>2</sup> Such claims are generally delivered with a sense of shock, as if the perception were entirely new. They probably tell us more about our cultural investment in certain ideals of childhood than the actual social position. In this work I trace some of the prior history of these intellectual and cultural concerns in the literature and sciences of childhood of the Victorian age. Worries about exam pressures, child sexuality, or the feral child are all to be found there. Victorian attitudes to childhood have too frequently been associated in the popular mind with the old adage ‘Children should be seen and not heard’, suggesting a repressive, restrictive culture that had no interest in the inner world of the child. The actual story is both more intriguing and more complex. Far from exiling the child to a metaphorical dark corner, the Victorians opened up the child mind to literary, scientific, and medical scrutiny. Although Romantic writers had established a cult of the child, it was the Victorians who created the first detailed literary and scientific studies of child development. In the process they established the frameworks of our current understanding, posing many of the questions that still trouble us today.

*The Mind of the Child* examines the complex interplay between the literary and the scientific domains as writers and experimenters sought to

define and explore the baffling territory of the child psyche. It focuses on a period in England, between 1840 and 1900, when the inner workings of the child mind became for the first time an explicit object of study across the cultural and disciplinary spectrum, from novels and autobiographies to psychiatric case studies. This was an era which witnessed the rise of child psychology as a discipline, and the first detailed analyses of nervous disorders and insanity in childhood. It also saw the publication of all those powerful novels of child development by Dickens, the Brontës, and Eliot which opened up for the reading public the inner thoughts and feelings of childhood, helping to define both for the Victorians and our own culture what it means to be a child. The sense of powerlessness, and of fierce injustice, experienced by *Jane Eyre* or *Maggie Tulliver*, for example, still resonate with us today. Whilst there had been innumerable educational treatises from the late eighteenth century onwards focusing on how to teach a child, and factory reformers had campaigned for changes to the physical conditions of the working-class child, it is not until the mid-nineteenth century that we find detailed attention paid to the processes of mental development in childhood. In part this shift can be explained by changing social structures, with the rise of the middle classes, and by increasing levels of education, opening up new social spaces and stretches of time in which to be a child. The emergence, from the late eighteenth century, of the historical sciences, and concomitant modes of understanding natural and social forms as outcomes of processes of historical development, also shifted attitudes to the child.<sup>3</sup> No longer just a stage to be passed through before being launched into life, childhood became the key to understanding the adult form, a crucial time which laid the foundations for the future. As Wordsworth noted in 1807, 'The Child is Father of the Man': it was a perception which was to guide the literature and sciences of childhood in the Victorian age.

This study begins with the 1840s, which saw an extraordinary flowering of the literature of child development, as well as the first steps towards establishing the child mind as an area of medical investigation: the first journal of medical psychology, the *Journal of Psychological Medicine and Mental Pathology*, was established in 1848, whilst the same period saw the publication of *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* (1847), *Dombey and Son* (1848), and *David Copperfield* (1850), as well as various autobiographical accounts of early childhood memories.<sup>4</sup> In the following pages I chart the interrelations of these various forms of exploration and the changing models of childhood

which emerged over the next few decades, until the turn of the century, the point at which histories of child psychology or child psychiatry normally begin. By looking in detail at medical and psychological texts which have hitherto received very little academic attention, and by placing them in a wider cultural context, the study will offer a significantly revised history of the emergence of child psychiatry and psychology. It will also illuminate the processes by which new fields of science come into being.

In cultural and psychoanalytic accounts of childhood, the dominance of Freudian theory has tended to create a revolutionary, or originary, moment around 1900 which has obscured earlier work in the field.<sup>5</sup> Freud's observation, in particular, that no previous author had recognized the existence of the sexual instinct in childhood has largely been taken at face value.<sup>6</sup> If we take the emerging medical psychiatry of childhood of the preceding decades into account, however, a far more interesting picture begins to emerge. The Victorian child is not only sexualized but prone to numerous nervous disorders. Our current concerns about child sexuality, or nervous breakdowns in the face of educational pressures, are prefigured in this era.<sup>7</sup> Although nineteenth-century psychiatric texts frequently drew on literary works as case studies, the few historical studies we have of early child psychiatry have tended to be narrowly focused, neglecting the broader cultural context.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, studies of the figure of the child in nineteenth-century literature have been more prone to draw on Freudian analysis as an interpretative tool than to place both Freud and literary representations in a shared cultural and scientific frame of understanding.<sup>9</sup> By drawing them together in this study I hope to gain a deeper, more complex understanding of nineteenth-century constructions of the child mind.

The relations between the different disciplinary fields with reference to childhood are by no means straightforward. It is certainly not the case that literary texts simply drew on emerging scientific theories. Indeed, the reverse can be shown to be true, with key literary works playing a formative role in the development of the frameworks of nineteenth-century child psychiatry. As I will show in the first chapter, one of the first textbooks in child psychiatry drew its diagnostic categories from a literary text. Nor did different areas of study emerge at the same pace; rapid developments in one field were met by relative silences in another. Very different images of the child mind also began to emerge; there was no unanimity, no single Victorian construction of the inner child. Psychology and psychiatry, for



example, produced from the same biological principles highly discrepant models of the child: naive innocent, living in a world of wonder and mythological fancy, or animalistic product of a savage past. Pre-existing religious and cultural models of childhood are transposed, with a new twist, into the terms of an emerging science. Rather than viewing the literary, cultural, and scientific projections of childhood as different disciplines, it makes sense to see them as mutually constitutive fields, drawing upon each other in various ways in constructing their developing models of childhood.

Following the publication of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) there were marked shifts in constructions of childhood as forms of evolutionary psychology and psychiatry began to emerge. The long-standing popular notion that the child is like an animal or savage was given apparent scientific validation in theories of recapitulation, in which the child was seen to mirror in its early years ancestral forms of the species, both human and animal. Similarly, within the emerging field of anthropology, women, children, and savages were repeatedly linked together as figures who stood outside the unstated norms of white middle-class masculinity. The figure of the child, I would suggest, lies at the heart of nineteenth-century discourses of gender, race, and selfhood: a figure who is by turns animal, savage, or female, but who is located not in the distant colonies, nor in the mists of evolutionary time, but at the very centre of English domestic life.<sup>10</sup>

During the second half of the nineteenth century the child became the focus of unprecedented observation, analysis, and speculation, culminating in the final decade in the foundation of a child study movement which brought together psychologists, educators, writers, and parents in dedicated study of the developing mind of the child. At issue were many of the same concerns that animate such studies today, language acquisition, the emergence of a sense of self, or the workings of imagination, but generally underpinned by a desire to find in the child evidence of primitive or animal ancestry. Such studies gave rise to numerous autobiographies and fictional accounts of childhood but also fed into the work of those two giants of twentieth-century child study—Freud and Piaget—both of whom were influenced by theories of recapitulation.<sup>11</sup> Our current frameworks of understanding have their roots firmly in the nineteenth century.

To understand why the child mind became an object of such fascination in the nineteenth century, it is necessary to turn first to the eighteenth, to a period when emerging structures of middle-class family life were creating new social spaces for childhood and the writings of

Rousseau laid the foundations for Romantic conceptions of the child.<sup>12</sup> In his Preface to *Émile, ou de l'Éducation* (1762), Rousseau announced sweepingly that 'We know nothing of childhood'. Earlier writers had focused on what a child ought to learn, without regard to its capabilities: 'They are always looking for the man in the child, without considering what he is before he becomes a man.'<sup>13</sup> Rousseau opened up the question of what it means to be a child, although it should be noted that the perspective throughout the text is decidedly not that of the child itself but the tutor.<sup>14</sup> Where earlier generations had sought to enhance and accelerate the processes whereby a child could acquire the knowledge and understanding required to enter adulthood, Rousseau sought, if anything, to retard development, to ensure that a child remained a child as long as 'nature' dictated. Rousseau's child is a child of nature in two senses: he is to be brought up in the countryside, away from corruptions induced by the accelerated forms of learning created by social and city living, but he is also to be raised according to the laws of development laid down by nature: 'Nature would have them children before they are men.' 'Childhood', he announces, 'has its own ways of seeing, thinking, and feeling . . . and I should no more expect judgment in a ten-year-old child than I should expect him to be five feet high.'<sup>15</sup> In the late nineteenth century, members of the child study movement spent many hours of intense observation trying to outline the precise forms of these ways of 'seeing, thinking, and feeling'. Rousseau's primary interest, however, lay not in such details but in defining childhood as a space and time that was not adult. His childhood is a peculiarly empty space. The mind, he argues, 'should be left undisturbed until its faculties have developed'. The child should not be treated as if it is a creature of reason, and should certainly not be introduced to reading, which is 'the curse of childhood', before age 12, and preferably not before 15.<sup>16</sup> Although Rousseau, despite his protestations of originality, drew extensively on Locke's hugely influential study *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1692), he parts company from him here in his insistence that the child must be kept away from books and formal education.

Childhood for Rousseau is a time that stretches until around the age of 20, during which period the child will be kept sequestered from society, so that his 'desires may be kept in ignorance and his senses pure'.<sup>17</sup> Rousseau's child is not intrinsically pure and innocent; he is kept so only by rigid control. *Émile* is a text containing many contradictions, and not surprisingly gave rise

to numerous conflicting interpretations, not least because of the paradox at the heart of the work whereby the freedom of this 'natural' child is only produced by intensive parental labour and control. Rousseau expanded both the time to be occupied by childhood, and the responsibilities of the parent, who now has a duty to maintain the child in the requisite state of natural childhood.

Despite being banned on publication, and the obvious impossibility of fulfilling many of the prescriptions, Rousseau's work nonetheless had a major impact on theories of child rearing and education, both on the Continent and in England. It has been calculated that around 200 treatises on pedagogy were published in England between 1762 and 1800, most showing, in one form or another, the influence of Rousseau.<sup>18</sup> There were even attempts to raise children of nature, as in Richard Lovell Edgeworth's lamentable failure with his oldest son, who ended up both unloved and uncontrollable, and Thomas Day's more disturbing attempt to raise two girls from foundling hospitals as potential marriage partners for himself.<sup>19</sup> More successful were the educational texts produced by Edgeworth, *Practical Education* (1798, co-written with his daughter Maria), and Day, *Sandford and Merton* (1783), which took from Rousseau the idea of learning from nature, and focused on observation and experiment.<sup>20</sup> Edgeworth based his work partly on 'registers' of the educational development of his own younger children, which he had initially developed around 1776 and Maria later maintained, setting a model for those earnest observers of children who were to follow a century later.

Such rational models of education were a source of despair to Wordsworth, who created in Book V of *The Prelude* his vision of 'the monster birth / Engendered by these too industrious times', who is 'no child, / But a dwarf man', a prodigy surrounded by his telescopes, crucibles, and maps, whose 'deep experiments' cause country folk to tremble: 'All things are put to question; he must live / Knowing that he grows wiser every day / Or else not live at all.'<sup>21</sup> His portrait of the driven child of rational education is set immediately before his own version of the natural child, the Boy of Winander (first published separately in *Lyrical Ballads*, 1800). Where the child of Day and the Edgeworths is guided, prompted and answered by its educational mentor, the Boy of Winander puts his question to nature in the form of an owl's cry, and is answered not by an adult voice but by nature's echo, transforming his hoot into 'mirth and jocund din' (V, l. 404). The Wordsworthian child is, in Judith Plotz's phrase, a 'sequestered child',

living largely alone in nature, a 'happy Creature' who 'of herself / Is all-sufficient' ('Characteristics of a Child Three Years Old', 1815).<sup>22</sup> Where the adult voice does intrude, it is not to deliver a lesson but rather to learn from the child, as in 'We are Seven' or 'Anecdote for Fathers'. Authority has switched to the natural, unself-conscious child, who becomes the object of adult male fascination, and nostalgic yearning for a state that can never be reclaimed. This Romantic cult of the child continued into the Victorian period, reaching its peak in the 1890s when bands of self-proclaimed 'child-lovers' sought to chronicle the outpourings of the childish imagination. The poet's quest for authenticity in the 1790s had become part of the scientist's agenda by the 1890s.

Wordsworth's sense of irredeemable loss, fixated on the figure of the small child, was mitigated, however, by a theory of development, a belief that the early scenes of childhood established the tenor of the adult mind. Although *The Prelude* was not published until 1850, the same year as Dickens's semi-autobiographical fiction *David Copperfield*, early extracts, such as 'Influence of Natural Objects in calling forth and strengthening imagination in boyhood and early youth' (1809) had firmly established the principles in the public mind. Perhaps Wordsworth's greatest legacy to the Victorian age was his line 'The Child is father of the Man', which lay behind the novels of development of the period and became the mantra of the educationists, and child psychologists of the late century.<sup>23</sup> Where earlier novels had tended to commence with the protagonists on the cusp of adulthood, the emotions and experiences of the child now became a significant area of exploration, as writers mapped out the early formation of the mind. Rather surprisingly, given the strong interest exhibited in childhood in the pedagogical literature of the post-Rousseau era, there was no equivalent establishment of a science of childhood. The closest the early nineteenth century came to such a science was the attention paid to the discoveries of 'wild children', figures who were seen to offer the characteristics of early childhood in older bodies. Victor, the 'Wild Boy of Aveyron', who was studied in detail by Jean Itard, became, in Nikolas Rose's formulation, 'the first psychological subject'.<sup>24</sup> A science of normal child development, however, had to wait until the late 1870s, when the publication of Charles Darwin's article 'A Biographical Sketch of an Infant' heralded the emergence, across Europe and America, of a new scientific domain of observation and experimentation which took as its subject the young child. In the work of figures such as Wilhelm Preyer in Germany,

Bernard Perez in France, James Sully in England, and G. Stanley Hall in America, we see the emergence of a psychology of childhood.<sup>25</sup> Although the focus of this study is on England, the movements it describes were felt across Europe and America, presenting a marked unanimity of approach to the importance of child study, even though there were notable national and regional differences in emphasis and interpretation.

The earlier silence with reference to a science of childhood is misleading, however; from the late eighteenth century there was growing interest in recording the early development of children, by parents, teachers, and philosophers. Darwin's own records dated back to a period forty years earlier before the publication of his article. In 1838, as Darwin painstakingly filled his notebooks, working and reworking the ideas which were to yield his theories of biological evolution, he took time to compose his 'Autobiographical Fragment', where he attempted to chart his earliest memories.<sup>26</sup> The following year, with the birth of his first son William, he started the notebook which he would maintain for four years, recording the development of his children. The three forms of writing complement one another: Darwin's reflections on the origins of species relate directly to his personal speculations on the processes by which the infant and child transmute into adult forms. Autobiography, infant records, and evolutionary theory all converge, setting the pattern for the series of interconnections I will explore in broader form in this book. Interestingly, Darwin's study of his infants had to wait even longer than his theory of species for publication: although it fed into *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872), it was only published in its own right in 1877 in the pages of the new journal, *Mind*, which soon saw a plethora of articles on infant development.<sup>27</sup>

The reasons for these hesitations and delays are multiple and complex, ranging from the politics of domestic space—how the scientist could gain access to his living materials—to more fundamental issues of how to define the form and subject of a new area of science. Similar hesitations are evident in the sphere of psychiatry, where discussions of child neuroses form part of the early discourse of psychiatry in the medical periodicals of the mid-century, but it is not until the latter decades of the century, when the principles of evolutionary psychology were established, that a recognizable field of child psychiatry begins to emerge. The range of discussion anticipates current concerns: the sexual turbulence of adolescence, excessive pressure from exams, anxieties leading to suicide, and even the child who murders. Although the murder of the 'toddler' James Bulger in 1993 by two 10-year-old boys understandably

caused an outcry in the media, it is instructive to note that there were firm precedents in the nineteenth century, and similar soul searching with regard to cultural understandings of the capabilities and responsibilities of the child.<sup>28</sup> The media coverage of the case highlighted and intensified our polarized constructions of childhood, with the innocent ‘toddler’ preyed upon by the feral child. Nineteenth-century psychiatry also addressed, even more directly, the issue of the child as animal, but its findings, interestingly, were often more sympathetic: a child who murders should be deemed, almost by definition, to be insane, since murder was not an act encompassed in understandings of a ‘natural’ child. Questions of insanity, I will show, were at the heart of nineteenth-century debates about what it meant to be a child.

Through literary readings and explorations of the popular, scientific, and medical discourse of the era, this study aims to offer a guide to the emerging constructions of the child mind. What it does not offer is a social history of Victorian childhood, whether domestic or labour-oriented. The explicit focus on the mind, rather than the body, of the child means that the subjects are largely middle or upper class. The assumptions of the child study movement, for example, relate entirely to middle- and upper-class households, where parent and child will have the space and time to devote to developmental study. The working classes do figure in some psychiatric cases, or more broadly with reference to the social anxiety that the extension of education to the lower classes would lead to an increase in suicides amongst the young. In general, however, where the ‘child mind’ is referred to in psychological texts, the implied model is middle class. Forced to work from an early age, the working classes were not deemed to inhabit the same sphere of childhood as the middle classes, where childhood meant an extended period lived explicitly apart from the adult world. Labouring children were figured instead as ‘precocious’ (in their sexual knowledge), premature adults who had not undergone the requisite stages of development. In the powerful rhetoric of the reformers, the working-class child was ‘unnatural’, a child deprived of childhood, for ‘what power of mental development has a half-starved, half-naked child?’<sup>29</sup>

An article on ‘Children and Modern Literature’ for the *National Review* (1892) noted that ‘It is often said that “this is the Age of Children”’; the rise of literature centring on children, it argued, was both a cause and effect of new attitudes to children which had placed them ‘at the front’ of attention.<sup>30</sup> As more recent scholarship has shown, the nineteenth century witnessed a rapid rise in literature for children, moving from the instructional tales of Maria

Edgeworth and Anna Barbauld, and the morally improving texts of the Religious Tract Society and Mrs Sherwood, through, in the second half of the century, to the adventure literature for boys of W. H. G. Kingston, Captain Mayne Reid, and R. M. Ballantyne, the more domestic-focused fiction for girls of Charlotte Yonge, Elizabeth Sewell, or Juliana Ewing, and the fantasy and fairy tale forms of Lewis Carroll, Charles Kingsley, George MacDonald, and Jean Ingelow.<sup>31</sup> There was also considerable growth from the 1850s of periodicals designed for children which carried fiction.<sup>32</sup> Whilst this fiction forms part of the context of my study, the focus will be on representations of the child mind for general readers, rather than the more mediated forms to be found in explicit children's literature.<sup>33</sup>

The concept of a child, with reference to age, was decidedly elastic in the nineteenth century, shifting markedly according to context.<sup>34</sup> Texts give widely variant definitions of the age range they deem to be covered by the term 'child', or 'youth'. Childhood was also seen to encompass adolescence, which at times was deemed to stretch from puberty, and at others, more traditionally, was situated in a later age range. T. S. Clouston's 'Puberty and Adolescence Medico-Psychologically Considered' (1880), for example, situates the onset of puberty between 11 and 14 but defines adolescence as the period from 18 to 25.<sup>35</sup> In his later work, *The Hygiene of Mind* (1906), Clouston confirmed these demarcations, defining infancy as birth to 7, boyhood or girlhood from 7 to 15, and adolescence from 15 to 25.<sup>36</sup> Other texts extended the period of 'youth' to 30.<sup>37</sup> Whilst literary texts were routinely invoked by nineteenth-century psychological texts as forms of case studies, Clouston actually draws his definition of female adolescence from George Eliot's depiction of Gwendolen Harleth in *Daniel Deronda*.<sup>38</sup> Since Gwendolen is actually in her early twenties, Clouston's judgement suggests we should take literally Eliot's labelling of her as a 'Spoiled Child'.<sup>39</sup> The difficulties we face disentangling the precise ages suggested by nineteenth-century terms for non-adult states mirror the Victorians' own confusion and lack of certainty in this area. Although the age of majority was 21, the cultural pressure to extend the protected domain of childhood for the middle and upper classes was reflected in the seeming upward drift in age range in their discussions of childhood. In this study I follow Victorian latitude, considering literary, scientific, and medical representations where the subject is deemed to be a child.

The structure of the book is roughly chronological. The first part focuses broadly on the period 1840–60, looking at the emerging discussions of insanity in childhood, and the transposition of moral, religious, and educational

preoccupations into medical terms. The figure of the passionate child or liar is traced across literary and medical texts at a time when psychiatric accounts were turning the imaginative child of the Romantics into a figure of pathology. 'Night terrors' provides an overall frame, moving backwards to the Romantic era and forward to the 1890s to consider the more permissive attitudes towards the imaginative and fearful child generated by evolutionary psychology. The section draws on an extensive range of material, whilst taking as its touchstones two key texts of childhood of the period, *Jane Eyre* (1847) and *The Mill on the Floss* (1860).

Part II considers novels of child-rearing and education of the same mid-century period, set in the context of concerns about forced education, overpressure on the young, and the dangers of precocity. The discussion of *Dombey and Son* (1848) explores how Dickens links educational practices to the new models of temporality emerging in the industrial economy, whilst that of *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* (1859), considers Meredith's critique of Rousseau in his portrait of natural, sexual development in the young.

Part III addresses the changing constructions of childhood which emerge from the 1860s in post-Darwinian psychiatry. The focus is now on the greater animality and sexuality of the child, whilst the spectre of degeneration and undesired inheritance also transforms earlier understandings of childhood innocence. The chapter on sexuality and the novel, however, suggests more nuanced readings of child sexuality, moving from Juliana Ewing's *Six to Sixteen* (1872) to the new-woman fiction of Sarah Grand and James's tantalizing text of 1898, 'The Turn of the Screw'. The pessimism of evolutionary psychiatry was countered by the emerging discipline of developmental psychology, explored in Chapter 11. From discussions of the first experiments on children, the text moves to consider at one extreme the development of the baby show, and at the other Wilkie Collins's interweaving of vivisection, sexuality, and childhood in *Heart and Science* (1883). 'Monkeys and children' continues the animal theme, placing the discussion of the evolutionary psychology of Darwin's intellectual heir in this field, George Romanes, in the context of domestic monkey keeping.

The final part focuses predominantly on the 1890s, when the emerging field of child psychology gave rise to the Child Study Movement, bringing together psychologists, evolutionary biologists, teachers, parents, and literary figures to explore the early years of a child's life. The first chapter looks in depth at the theories of the English leader of the field, James Sully, whilst



also considering some of the more bizarre evolutionary readings of behaviour in the young child. A range of literary autobiographies are placed in the context of child study, whilst *Father and Son*, although not published until 1907, is also considered in the light of the evolutionary impulse to understand the early workings of the child mind. The final two texts offer a counterpoise to the more confident projections of the Child Study Movement. *What Maisie Knew* questions how far we can really know the content of children's minds, whilst exposing the myriad ways in which adults can maim and destroy the life of a child. *Jude the Obscure* takes us back to psychiatry, to the debates about overpressure, and to the idea that the child might be born with a deadly inheritance. In asking the unthinkable—why a child might choose to commit suicide—it provides a fitting epitaph for the 'age of the child'.

PART

I

Early Child Psychiatry  
and the Literary  
Imagination

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# I

## The Emergence of Child Psychiatry

In his introduction to one of the first book-length studies of child psychiatry, *Functional Nervous Disorders in Childhood* (1907), based on lectures delivered in the 1890s, Leonard Guthrie looked back to the early decades of the Victorian era, when relatively little medical attention was paid to the child mind. Not only the doctors but the parents were to blame, he suggests:

Advice was not asked for peevish, passionate children, nor for those who were afraid of the dark, and unnaturally timid, absent-minded, or brooding and morose, jealous, spiteful or cruel, nor for mischievous, untruthful, dishonest, or immoral children. All such defects were regarded as moral rather than morbid, and were treated as such.

In this catalogue of traits we have a succinct summary of the areas of child behaviour the new science of child psychiatry was claiming for its own. Far from resisting such territorial encroachments, however, parents were now, Guthrie claims, almost too eager to participate in the medicalization of childhood. They had formed 'Parents' Unions and Childhood Societies', and had 'learnt that morality is largely a question of health and temperament and environment'. As a consequence, they were perhaps too ready to trace forms of morbidity in their children. They were

apt nowadays to look for the stigmata of degeneration in their offspring, and to suffer tortures of remorse when their little ones are naughty. Peccadilloes are magnified into enormous misdemeanours suggestive of moral insanity. Petty ailments, especially if combined with a vile temper, are regarded as evidence of a gouty inheritance. A child who shows signs of intelligence above the average is thought to be in imminent danger of over-taxing his brain.<sup>1</sup>

Although Guthrie is here conflating very different streams of thought and activity, from the extremes of degeneration theory to the earnest, optimistic

meetings of the Parents' Unions, he captures the enormous changes which took place in the final decades of the nineteenth century when preoccupation with the 'mind of the child' became not only a scientific discipline but also almost a cultural obsession.

Guthrie's own diagnosis of the problem is instructive. A corrective will be found, he suggests, by combining knowledge of diseases 'with the study of childhood itself'. The form such a study should take seems, for Guthrie, to be focused precisely on a thorough absorption of George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*. He quotes at length from her reflections on the sorrows of childhood:

We can no longer recall the poignancy of that moment and weep over it as we do over the remembered sufferings of five or ten years ago. Every one of those keen moments has left its trace and lives in us still, but such traces have blent themselves irrecoverably with the [finer] texture of our youth and manhood; and so it comes [to pass] that we can look on at the troubles of our children with a smiling disbelief in the reality of their pain.<sup>2</sup>

The passage occurs in the novel at the point when the young Maggie Tulliver, in desperation and daring, has cut off her troublesome hair, and is now facing 'that bitter sense of the irrevocable which was almost an everyday experience of her small soul'.<sup>3</sup> Eliot's formulation offers a complex model of mind and memory. Based on the physiological psychology of her partner, G. H. Lewes, and the assumption that all activities of the mind were physiologically grounded, it suggests that we fail to recall the sufferings of childhood precisely because they are so interwoven in the fabric of our minds. The intensity of the experience almost guarantees that we too, as adults, will join the common rank, and look on childhood anguish 'with a smiling disbelief in the reality of their pain'. Together with that other novel which focused on the passionate sufferings of a female child, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), Eliot's text helped to transform mid-century understandings of the child mind. In place of Lockean and associationist models which held that children, due to lack of accumulated experience, could not suffer as intensely as adults, Eliot insists that it is the very absence of a comparative dimension in that 'strangely perspectiveless conception of life' which gives childhood anguish its bitterness and intensity.<sup>4</sup>

Guthrie draws on Eliot to suggest that it is not only happiness in later life which is determined by childhood experience but also mental health. Suffering in childhood is not only real but has a permanent impact on the psyche. *The Mill on the Floss* was clearly a formative work for Guthrie, as if,

in Eliot's phrase, his early reading now formed part of the 'firmer texture' of his adult mind. A passionate identification with Maggie Tulliver seems to run through his text. His definition of 'The Neurotic Temperament', as 'a disposition in which the emotions are easily kindled, strongly felt, and restrained or controlled with difficulty' sounds suspiciously like a description of Maggie, a reading confirmed by his subsequent, surprisingly disarming observation that 'those of us who are neurotic will agree with George Eliot that our emotional sufferings in early childhood were very great indeed, that they were intensified by being neglected or ignored, that they affected our health as well as happiness, and that we bear their traces still'.<sup>5</sup> Dispassionate science grapples with, and is partly overcome by, expressive identification with its subject. Guthrie writes as a self-confessed neurotic who both celebrates his condition and traces it back to the sufferings of childhood: a clash, as with Maggie, between a gifted, creative temperament, and a dull, oppressive social environment.

Guthrie contrasts the Neurotic Temperament with that of 'The Unemotional Person', who bears, in comparison, a charmed existence: 'Emotions he must have, of course, but they are mainly pleasurable, and none of them is too keen.' Such a being is the product of a long line of 'sturdy and somewhat commonplace people. None of his ancestors has been in any way distinguished, except for unimpeachable respectability and orthodoxy.' We are in the territory here of that 'pink and white bit of masculinity', Maggie's brother, Tom, and his inheritance of the temperament and traditions of the Dodson family, whose religion consisted in 'revering whatever was customary and respectable'.<sup>6</sup> Although describing the norm of English middle-class boyhood, Guthrie finds it hard to keep the scorn out of his voice. This 'manly' boy abhors classics (in parallel to Tom, who struggles so fiercely under Mr Stelling's tutelage), and likes killing animals, but only because 'he is incapable of conceiving that animals have feelings worth respecting. Like Tom Tulliver, he will believe that worms do not feel, or if they do it doesn't matter much.'<sup>7</sup> The explicit reference makes overt the ways in which this entire depiction of the 'unemotional person' is modelled on Tom Tulliver, who was 'fond of animals—fond, that is, of throwing stones at them'. Whilst Maggie creates imaginative stories of the domestic life of insects, Tom, in a highly symbolic gesture, crushes an earwig as an 'easy means' of proving the 'entire unreality' of Maggie's stories.<sup>8</sup> As in Guthrie's analysis, creativity is defeated by the phlegmatic, unimaginative temperament which upholds respectable society.<sup>9</sup>

*Functional Nervous Disorders in Childhood* does not simply draw on George Eliot for a colourful illustration of a medical theory: the fundamental division between the neurotic and unemotional temperament which underpins the text's overall analysis is itself a reworking of the division between Maggie and Tom Tulliver. Guthrie's psychiatric categories of neurosis, his ideas on social evolution and the relations between self and environment, and between childhood experience and the adult state, indeed even his forms of self-understanding, are drawn from Eliot's text. This is an unusually strong and detailed case, but it well serves to exemplify the ways in which literature could infuse, and indeed direct, the formation of child psychiatry and its categories of perception and understanding.

The current cultural dominance of Freudian theory has tended to obscure the interesting pre-history of child psychiatry in Britain as it emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>10</sup> Guthrie was drawing on a complex tradition of debate which extended across medical, literary, cultural, and even religious texts. At the heart of these debates was the question of whether a child could be deemed to be insane. Certainly, in the literary field, the idea of insanity is never far removed from depictions of the disruptive child. Maggie's mother believes her child is 'like a Bedlam creatur' and Maggie herself is always haunted by the fear that she will be seen as an idiot. Tom laughs at her when she cuts her hair because she looks 'like the idiot we throw our nut shells to at school', and when she runs away to join the gypsies, she is seized with trepidation in case they too will think her 'an idiot'.<sup>11</sup> In Anne Brontë's *Agnes Grey* (1847), a text which is almost an inverse of *Jane Eyre*, as written from the perspective of an adult trying to control unruly children, the governess narrator hopes that she can in time help her charges to become 'more humanised' and 'more manageable', 'for a child of nine or ten, as frantic and ungovernable as these at six or seven would be a maniac'.<sup>12</sup> What is the difference between the ages of 6 and 9 that can convert childish disobedience into full-blown mania? The judgement is startling in its decisiveness, which is based on no recognized legal or medical demarcation. Rather, it seems to stand witness to a popular need to overcome the daunting alterity of childhood by bringing it under the control of adult classifications.

Madness also figures in *Jane Eyre*, not just as a shadowy association between the passionate child and the mad wife, but as an explicit adult

response. When Jane Eyre breaks out in childhood into a fit of rage the Gateshead servants see her as a 'mad cat' and gaze on her 'as incredulous of my sanity', concluding that "'it was always in her"'.<sup>13</sup> Underneath the cover of a docile demeanour she had lived a double life, nursing the germs of this passionate fury which finally breaks out, shattering social decorum, and expectations of 'natural' social behaviour. From the very opening of the novel we learn that Jane Eyre is already an outcast. She is not to be allowed into the family group until she has obeyed the paradoxical injunction to acquire a "'more sociable and child-like disposition . . . something lighter, franker, more natural as it were"'.<sup>14</sup> How does a child learn to be 'child-like'? The contradictions in Mrs Reed's position embody those of the wider culture, as medical writers and social commentators sought to define the boundaries of that threateningly unknowable species of humanity, the child.

Although the servants readily classify Jane as insane, psychiatric writers of the first half of the nineteenth century were less willing to commit themselves. Discussions of idiocy in children were well advanced by the 1830s and 1840s and laid the groundwork for later thinking about normal and abnormal development of mind in the child. As yet, however, they remained distinct from issues of insanity. Theories of partial insanity, emerging from the 1830s, gave new possibilities of thinking through this question. Subsequent to the work of J. E. D. Esquirol and J. C. Prichard, sufferers from moral insanity could be held to be of perfectly sound intellect, but merely disordered in their moral judgement; sufferers from monomania could be insane in one aspect of their lives, but otherwise perfectly normal. Perhaps most alarmingly, monomaniacs and the morally insane could frequently live amongst the general populace undetected, their insanity lying latent, or not recognized as such.<sup>15</sup> Like Jane Eyre, they finally break cover, confirming to all around that "'it was always in her"'.

Ideas of partial insanity gave rise to crucial debates on the issue of individual responsibility. When is an individual legally responsible for his or her actions? Women, who were held to be more liable to insanity due to the ways in which their minds were subjected to the unstable tyrannies of their reproductive systems, were an important focus of these debates.<sup>16</sup> The mid-century saw an increasing visibility of the insanity defence in English courts, with high-profile cases of women absolved from crimes due to forms of insanity resulting from their bodily states.<sup>17</sup> Courts in these cases accepted that the balance between mind and body in women, and hence their relationship to rational responsibility, was different from that of men. The position of



children, however, remained unclear. In 1843, Daniel McNaughtan, who was being tried for the murder of the prime minister's secretary, was acquitted on the grounds of insanity, and there followed the introduction of the McNaughtan Rules, still in use today, which placed the onus on those invoking the insanity defence to prove that the accused lacked an understanding of the nature of the crime committed, and could not tell right from wrong.<sup>18</sup> There was no ruling, however, as to where this might place a child. At the heart of the issue lay the question of whether a child, who had not yet reached adult rationality, could even be held to suffer from insanity. And should adult models of understanding be applied to the child mind? Might there be in a child, as in a woman, a different relationship between mind and body, which would suggest alternative models of responsibility? And when might the child be deemed to have passed into the domains of moral and rational understanding?

For the Victorians, as for ourselves, there were no clear-cut answers to these questions. Childhood was an elastic category, deemed, in some rather startling definitions, to last until the age of 30. It became increasingly important during the period as a category of both social and self-understanding, and hence a depository of the confusions and contradictions of the culture. Then as now, children were both denounced as savages and made the focus of sentimental celebrations of innocence, holding the key to a lost world. Victorian attempts to interpret and control the boundaries between the adult and child state were cast into sharp relief by the medical discourse of psychiatry, which in asking questions about abnormality helped to refine and focus understandings of child normality.<sup>19</sup>

## Child Insanity

In 1873 *All the Year Round*, the periodical founded by Dickens, ran an article on the annual ball at Hanwell Lunatic Asylum. Although exceedingly positive in tone, it includes the painful sight of a girl aged 11 or 12: 'a child in a lunatic asylum! Think of that, parents, when you listen to the engaging nonsense of your little ones—think of the child in the Hanwell wards! Remember how narrow a line separates innocence from idiocy; so narrow a line that the words were once synonymous!'<sup>20</sup> The precise implications might be unclear, but not the general tenor of this warning; it belongs to a new climate of unease and fear, as parents

were encouraged to scrutinize their children for signs of potential mental disorder. Children were no longer deemed to be exempt from insanity, and the very signs of their childish innocence, their ‘engaging nonsense’, could actually be the markers of mental disease. As the psychiatrist James Crichton Browne had noted in 1860, we need to pay attention to the speech of young children for ‘in them those incoherent speeches, or odd remarks, which are attributed to childish unmeaning babbling and folly, may sometimes be in reality the result of delusions, illusions, and hallucinations’.<sup>21</sup>

Crichton Browne’s essay ‘Psychical Diseases of Early Life’, published in the *Asylum Journal of Mental Science* in 1860, was a decisive intervention in the emerging field of child psychiatry. Until mid-century, the general medical consensus, as he notes, was that a child could not become insane. If insanity was viewed as the loss of reason, then a child, who had not yet attained a state of reason, could not be held to suffer from insanity. As Henry Maudsley later put it, in his inimitable fashion:

How soon can a child go mad? Obviously not before it has got some mind to go wrong, and then only in proportion to the quantity and quality of mind which it has. Now, it has no mind, properly speaking, when it begins to be; for it is then little more than a pulpy organic substance, unshapen, endowed with a confused capacity to feel impressions and to make movements.<sup>22</sup>

Although earlier commentators might not have shared this dismissive attitude to infancy, there was a strong commitment to the belief that insanity was a disease or a disorder that usually only attacked the adult mind. Crichton Browne set out to demonstrate not only that insanity was more common in infancy and childhood than was commonly supposed, but that it could also occur ‘in utero’.<sup>23</sup> Whilst he was not the first medical writer to address the issue of child insanity, his essay was the first to insist, so defiantly, and stridently, on its potential presence from the day of birth. Drawing on recent findings with reference to heredity and idiocy, he sought to recast understanding of the child mind. Children were no longer to be deemed exempt from any forms of insanity, for ‘almost every form of mental disease which may attack the adult, may also attack the infant and the child’, and indeed certain forms were more prevalent in childhood than in later years.<sup>24</sup>

Prior to this point, discussions of child insanity had tended to be more tentative, and indeed frequently self-contradictory. Assertions that a child could not suffer from insanity were often followed by cases which appeared to

prove exactly the contrary. Case lore was established by a small number of individual instances which took on a textual life of their own as they were repeated and reworked over decades, and even centuries. One of the most cited cases was that of the insane baby, first reported by Johann Ernst Greding in 1746, who, at four days, 'possessed so much strength in his legs and arms, that four women could at times, with difficulty restrain him'. He had strange fits of laughter, tore in anger his bed linen and even furniture, and could not be left alone for he would 'get on the benches and tables, and even attempt to climb up the walls'.<sup>25</sup> Although seeming to belong more to the domain of folk tale than medical science, the case was cited with utter credulity by a stream of medical commentators, suggesting a real level of psychological investment in the idea of a mad baby. In the development of psychiatric case lore, fact and fiction blend together as decisively as in the more explicit borrowings from literary texts.

Just as the mad wife in *Jane Eyre* became an iconic representation of the destructive force which might lurk behind demure womanhood, so the insane baby became a focused expression of equivalent fears with reference to infancy. Far from being a helpless innocent, the maniacal baby possessed enough strength to tear apart a home. The potent image answers, at a symbolic level, the vexed question of how so small a being could yet destroy domestic harmony. It also answers to the baffled frustration evoked by a being, supposedly human, who remains insistently outside all appeals to reason. Medical writers employing the case used it unproblematically for their own ends, thus for Crichton Browne in 1860, it was a clear demonstration of the fact that children, just as much as adults, could suffer mania, whilst for Maudsley, writing nearly forty years later, it showed that, given the lack of mind in an infant, its expression of insanity was likely to be of a 'sensori-motor form'. Maudsley's rhetoric is revealing; from one case we slip imperceptibly into a description which appears to be of infancy in general:

Such are the convulsive strength in the arms and legs which nurses hardly restrain, the uncontrollable fits of laughter without any evident reason, the furious gaspings and tearings, the violent paroxysms of crying which cannot be checked by ordinary means. The little creature is an automatic machine stirred by sensory impressions to disorderly and destructive action.<sup>26</sup>

The clinical legend of the mad baby is here deployed to support Maudsley's contention that, from an evolutionary point of view, the baby has scarcely reached the stage of the proto-human.

Other repeatedly cited cases tended to be more measured. One of the key reference points in this literature was the work of John Haslam, apothecary to Bethlehem Hospital, who included in his *Observations on Madness and Melancholy* (1809), a chapter on 'Cases of Insane Children'. He offers details of three children, a promising girl who (with shades of the current MMR controversy) had been inoculated against smallpox at age 2 and a half, and had turned insane; a 7-year-old boy whose mother had been frightened in the street whilst pregnant, and who had been uncontrollable since the age of 2, and finally a boy of 10 who had been so mischievous and uncontrollable since the age of 2 and a half that he had been sent away to an aunt who had never corrected him so he continued 'the creature of volition and the terror of the family'.<sup>27</sup> None of them is cured. Although these cases are assigned to an eclectic set of causes, Haslam's overall emphasis is twofold: heredity and education. The book, which takes its epigraph from Dr Johnson—'Of the uncertainties of our present state, the most dreadful and alarming is the uncertain continuance of reason'—is written to address the perceived 'alarming increase of insanity'.<sup>28</sup>

The preoccupation with hereditary transmission and escalating insanity, so often associated solely with the degenerationists of the late nineteenth century, is firmly implanted in Haslam's text. He warns parents to take care over their children's choice of marriage partner: 'an alliance with a family, where insanity has prevailed, ought to be prohibited'. Where 'one of the parents have been insane, it is more than probable that the offsprings will be similarly affected'. He offers numerous examples of families where all the children have become insane (the girls often at puberty).<sup>29</sup> His concerns with heredity are matched, however, by those with moral causes, particularly errors in education, 'which often plant in the youthful mind the seeds of madness which the slightest circumstances readily awaken into growth. It should be as much the object of the teachers of youth, to subjugate the passions, as to discipline the intellect'.<sup>30</sup> Insanity, it seems is not simply an inherited condition but can be evoked by faulty education; the model of mind, as in the case of the young boy exported to his aunt, is that of seething passions which need to be subjected to control if sanity is to be preserved. The discourse here is that of domestic advice manuals and religious texts, such as Isaac Watts, *The Doctrine of the Passions*, translated into medical terms.<sup>31</sup> The unruly child is not merely an affront to God and its family but a sufferer of insanity.

Haslam's work on child insanity was not systematic, but it set down markers for subsequent research. With reference to child insanity, the most significant developments took place in the 1830s and 1840s with the work of

J. E. D. Esquirol in France and J. C. Prichard in England, on, respectively, monomania and moral insanity, concepts of partial insanity which carried major implications for the ways in which the child mind could be perceived. Esquirol's work displays the same internal contradictions with respect to child insanity that are to be found in his predecessors. Thus he argued in *Mental Maladies* that

It is only at puberty, during the earliest menstrual efforts, or during, and after a too rapid growth, that we begin to notice certain cases of mental alienation. . . . Mental alienation might, therefore, be divided, relative to ages, into imbecility for childhood, mania and monomania for youth, lypemania or melancholy for consistent age, and into dementia for advanced life.<sup>32</sup>

Behind this attempt to map mental illness onto a truncated version of the seven ages of man, one can trace both a desire to preserve the innocence of childhood and an unwillingness to allow the child access to the (often doubtful) privileges of a fully formed intelligence.<sup>33</sup> Youth, which for Esquirol seems to stretch from puberty, becomes the prime time for both mania and the various forms of monomania, but childhood, he suggests, is still exempt. He offers, however, through the course of the text, numerous examples of children suffering from a range of forms of insanity, most strikingly three cases of homicidal monomania in childhood. All are girls; the first, aged 7, wishes to kill her mother, the second, also aged 7, wishes to kill her stepmother. In an unusual step, Esquirol gives an account of his interview with this second child. Departing from the customary procedure of offering a generalized account of problematic behaviour, he actually allows her voice to be heard:

Her replies were made without bitterness or anger; and with composure and indifference. Why do you wish to kill your mother? Because I do not love her. Why do you not love her? I do not know. Has she treated you ill? No. Is she kind to you? Yes. Why do you beat her? In order to kill her. How! In order to kill her? Yes, I desire that she may die. Your blows cannot kill her; you are too young for that. I know it. One must suffer, to die. I wish to make her sick, so that she may suffer and die, as I am too small to kill her at a blow. When she is dead who will take care of you? I do not know. You will be poorly taken care of, and poorly clothed, unhappy child! That is all one with me; I will kill her; I wish her dead.<sup>34</sup>

The dialogue, designed to show the unreason of the child, actually highlights the impercipience of Esquirol, whose monotonal questioning is utterly defeated by the child's quiet persistence. In effect, although not

design, the passage is similar to Wordsworth's poem 'We are Seven', where the logic of the child finally forces the condescending questioner to acknowledge the limitations of his own frame of thought. Although Wordsworth's poem is critical of the catechistic method so prevalent in educational texts for children, it functions, as Alan Richardson has shown, to leave the child 'frozen in a state of eternal innocence'.<sup>35</sup> Esquirol, in contrast, is baffled by a child who refuses to be swayed from her homicidal impulses, but insists on her right to feelings which violate all customary notions of childhood innocence.

The third case, also a girl, is of an 11-year-old, who (with shades of the Jamie Bulger case) lures younger children to a well and then pushes them down. The phenomenon of a child murdering another child is not, as the papers now might have us believe, a new occurrence. From this point on, with the growth of both the insanity plea and the role of the psychiatrist as medical witness in court, there is increasing popular interest in the figure of the child as murderer.<sup>36</sup> Esquirol's commentary on these cases is interesting; in the first case the girl had learnt onanism (masturbation) from older children and hence been corrupted; the second child had had her mind poisoned against her stepmother by careless talk from her grandmother. In the third case the girl had simply been brought up without the requisite moral training. We are not in the domain of Freud here; there is no attempt to analyse the family dynamics that could lead a child to hate her mother or stepmother. Equally, there is no attempt to speak of inherited traits, or, as in religious discourse, essential sinfulness: the children themselves are not the target of blame. Elsewhere, however, heredity, particularly as passed down by the mother, looms large in Esquirol's text, outweighing heavily any other physical or moral cause of insanity. He notes that he now has many children under his charge 'whose parents were under my care during the first years of my medical practice'.<sup>37</sup> We find in germ here that shadowy figure of sensation fiction, the family physician, who watches with anxiety as the children grow up, waiting for them to show the inevitable signs of their parents' mental disorders.<sup>38</sup>

In pioneering notions of partial insanity, or monomania, where the mind could be disordered in relation to a single idea or object, Esquirol overturned the belief that insanity represented a complete overthrow of the reasoning powers, and hence opened up the possibility that the child, who existed outside the domain of adult reason, could nonetheless be gripped by insanity.

Of the range of insanities, as distinct from forms of idiocy, from which children could suffer, Esquirol singled out epilepsy (deemed at this period a form of insanity), since women and children, being more impressionable, were more liable to attacks.<sup>39</sup> Lypemania, or melancholy, could also be experienced, particularly as caused by jealousy of a mother's caresses. At puberty, if the passions were not under control, a range of disorders could assail the young person, including religious melancholy, erotomania, and incendiary monomania (or pyromania), to which young girls, with their disruptive reproductive systems, were peculiarly liable.<sup>40</sup> In his lengthy section on suicide, Esquirol offers various childhood examples, including those created by faulty education, as in the 13-year-old who hung himself and left a note for his parents saying 'I bequeath my soul to Rousseau, my body to the earth'.<sup>41</sup> In addition to the various monomanias to which childhood was prey, the violent affliction of Mania, Esquirol argued, was most frequent in youth when the vital forces possessed their greatest energy, and feelings were heightened by 'the delusions of the imagination, and the seductions of love'.<sup>42</sup> The category of mental alienation which Esquirol reserved particularly for infancy was that of imbecility; he concludes his work with a section on idiocy, under which label he also includes cretins, cagots, and so-called wild children.<sup>43</sup> Although idiocy is primarily seen as present from birth, he also suggests that it can be created: children of 'brilliant imagination, a well developed understanding, and an active mind' can 'speedily exhaust themselves' so that their mental development is halted: 'This is accidental or acquired idiocy'.<sup>44</sup> Whilst Esquirol does not refer to problems of faulty education in this instance, the way is prepared for the later Victorian concern with the pressures of schooling, leading, as in the case of Dickens's Mr Toots in *Dombey and Son*, to a form of acquired idiocy.

Esquirol's research on monomania was deeply influential for James Cowles Prichard, writing concurrently in England, who introduced, in addition to what he termed the intellectual forms of insanity covered by monomania, the broad category of moral insanity, which he defined as 'a morbid perversion of the natural feelings, affections, inclinations, temper, habits, moral dispositions, and natural impulses, without any remarkable disorder or defect of the intellect or knowing faculties, and particularly without any insane illusion or hallucination'.<sup>45</sup> Prichard offers various cases of moral insanity striking the young, including, in one instance, a 7-year-old girl who had been a quick, lively, and affectionate child, but was sent home from school in consequence of a great change in her

conduct: 'She had become rude, abrupt, vulgar, and perfectly unmanageable; neglecting her school duties, running wildly about the fields and gardens, and making use of the most abusive language.' Her parents, unfortunately, 'had no control over her; indeed she appeared to despise them in proportion as they kindly remonstrated with her'.<sup>46</sup> Prichard decides that her parents are making her worse, and takes her into his own house, under the care of his wife. Although by this time she is eating her own faeces and has taken to defecating on the sitting-room carpet, in two months, he announces, without further explanation, she was cured. The case is exceedingly graphic, at one level, but enigmatic at another. There is no analysis of causation, or explanation of the cure, apart from the implied suggestion of mishandling by the parents, who alternated between humouring and harshly correcting her.

The suggestion that parental mismanagement might lie at the heart of child insanity was made more overtly by one of Prichard's contemporaries, Thomas Mayo, who presented a detailed case study of his treatment of a wayward 16-year-old youth in *Elements of the Human Mind* (1838). The boy was of a fair understanding, but, according to his father, of 'singularly unruly and untractable character, selfish, wayward, violent without ground or motive'. He also possessed a vivid fancy which supplied him profusely with 'sarcastic imagery', which was no doubt galling to his family. Under Mayo's care, away from his parents, he was cured within fourteen months. Mayo concludes: 'My pupil had been treated with affection, he had been tenderly entreated to conduct himself well, he had been threatened, he had been scolded, he had been punished; *but he had never been praised*.'<sup>47</sup> Under his regime, praise is central to both the treatment and cure. The analysis is striking for its modern ring—it would not be out of place in a twenty-first-century parenting manual. The parents have failed their child, not by harshness, or even uncaringness, but by their inability to nurture his self-confidence and belief. As with Prichard, the case history forms part of the new territorial claims being made by the rising profession of mental alienists, who are here offering superior skills in the domain of parenting, turning domestic issues into ones that can only be resolved with medical expertise. The territory is that also occupied by the Victorian novel, however, as writers sought to analyse how weak or absent parenting could lead to the excesses of John Reed in *Jane Eyre*, the selfish egotism of the charismatic Steerforth in *David Copperfield*, or the amorality of Dunsey Cass in *Silas Marner*. Literary and medical writers alike turned their attention to the failures lying at the heart of Victorian domesticity.



## Wayward Youth

By the 1840s the seeds of the idea that the child could suffer from insanity, or forms of nervous disorder, had been implanted within English culture. In 1848, the first journal devoted to the study of mental disorders was published: *The Journal of Mental Pathology and Psychological Medicine*. It was edited by the flamboyant psychiatrist Forbes Winslow, who appeared regularly in the nation's newspapers as an expert medical witness, arguing the case for an insanity plea in criminal trials.<sup>48</sup> Winslow was also a figure of literary bent, well connected in literary circles, with various popular medical titles to his name. Like Dickens, for whom he had the greatest respect, he had started his professional life in the 1830s as a reporter in the gallery of the House of Commons.<sup>49</sup> From the start the journal showed a preoccupation with mental disorder in childhood, exploring the issue across a range of articles. One of Winslow's first editorials opened with the case of a child murderer. The trial of 12-year-old William Newton Allnutt, who had murdered his grandfather by putting arsenic in his sugar basin, became the basis for a lengthy deliberation on partial insanity as found in children. Interestingly the trial, which was reported in detail in *The Times*, had created controversy, not so much because of the age of the defendant, but because the judge, Baron Rolfe, in his summing up, had dismissed as 'idle sophistry' the argument that Allnutt was suffering from an 'uncontrollable impulse'.<sup>50</sup> The defence had brought in the eminent psychiatrist John Conolly to testify that Allnutt was of 'unsound mind' and evidence had been produced to show, in a seeming covering of all bases, that Allnutt had an insane father, had suffered from a fall when young, and had also had scrofula, walked and cried out in his sleep, and exhibited behavioural problems. Baron Rolfe was clearly unsympathetic to such arguments, however, and 'rejoiced' when a guilty verdict was delivered. At no point, significantly, in the reporting of the trial, or the subsequent controversy, was the age of responsibility directly addressed, apart from the judge's final recommendation that some mercy should be shown, and the death sentence not applied, in view of the prisoner's age.

Conolly, delivering the Croonian lectures the following year, used the case to draw attention to the relations between insanity and crime. Any physician connected with an asylum, he argued, 'would have pronounced [Allnutt] to be faultily organized, diseased from birth, disposed to insanity, and requiring systematic education and long-continued care. His intellect

might be acute, but his moral sentiments were undeveloped.<sup>51</sup> As it was, the judge had 'scoffed' at the evidence, and the press had 'covered the doctors with abuse'. Notwithstanding the verdict, Conolly still claimed that 'It is at least generally admitted that where a child is always unreasonable, mischievous, and disposed to hurt itself or others, it must be considered insane.'<sup>52</sup> Clearly this was not the case in legal circles or the popular press, where the controversy surrounding the question of partial insanity had overshadowed the specific issue of child insanity. Winslow, in his editorial on the trial, changed the focus to childhood itself, arguing not only that partial insanity could exist, but that it could manifest itself in a range of forms within the young. His focus, however, tends to fall less on inherited disease than on faulty parenting, which is singled out as both a cause and exacerbating factor. Thus the monomania of hypochondriasis can be created by a mother's undue anxiety about a child's health, whilst the monomania of 'an irresistible love of pilfering' can be created if a child's 'covetous disposition' is habitually indulged and its 'inordinate desire' to possess an apple or a toy is gratified rather than punished.<sup>53</sup>

Other coverage of child insanity in the first volume included an article on the 'rare occurrence' of a case of mania in a 6-year-old girl who was admitted to Bethlehem Hospital in 1842. Although she was 'subject to violent and unaccountable outbursts of passion', her cure started taking effect after six months when she started applying herself to sewing, and she was later discharged, 'a modest, quiet, and intelligent looking girl'. An article on hallucinations gives examples of young people who develop impulses to kill, which they carry out years later, and one on 'Impulsive Insanity' considers the rise of insanity amongst the young in France 'owing to fashionable novels'.<sup>54</sup> 'Religious Insanity' examines the case of a young man who, from age 7, saw spectres on going to bed, which he later came to see as visions of the devil (the diagnosis was hereditary predisposition, weakened by scrofula).<sup>55</sup> The picture thus builds up of children as beings liable to uncontrolled passion which can manifest itself in homicidal impulses, and subject to hallucinations from an early age, with faulty parenting and inherited tendencies as the two primary forms of causation. All these elements are extended and confirmed in an article, ostensibly a review of works by George Moore and Madame de Wahl, but in practice almost a manifesto for Forbes Winslow's own views on the development of insanity in childhood.<sup>56</sup> The florid language is of a piece with Winslow's writings

elsewhere, as the modest, overtly Christian, meditations on self-control in George Moore are turned into a stark warning for upper-class parents:

Obtain admittance into the glittering mansions that adorn our cities or our parks, and behind their sumptuous hangings you will meet a spectre with the sign and seal on its front of woeful self-indulgence—manhood sapped in its prime, talents wasted at their source, and the warmest affections cankered at their core!<sup>57</sup>

The passage reads like a melodramatic endorsement of the views, popularized by Simon-André Tissot in the eighteenth century, that masturbation was an ever-present threat, destroying the health and even the lives of the young.<sup>58</sup> The question of child sexuality, largely missing from the preceding examples, is here placed centre stage. Written at a time when the translation of Claude François Lallemand's work on spermatorrhoea (a newly invented disease focusing on uncontrolled loss of semen) was to intensify fears of childhood masturbation, the article draws on the language of popular quack pamphlets, advertised constantly in the pages of even the most respectable newspapers—'woeful self-indulgence' and 'manhood sapped'.<sup>59</sup> Such terms work here, however, at multiple levels, using the commonly accepted codes of masturbation to suggest it forms but one part of a wider problem of upper-class self-indulgence and lack of psychological self-control. The article warns of the dangers of childhood passion, for the 'passionate child might, unchecked or uncorrected, become the madman or the fool'. The seeds or germ can be implanted in infancy, and can be traced back by the 'expert psychologist' to a time 'when it assumed no other form than that of caprice, (a very suspicious symptom at all times), self-will, ungovernable passion, want of self-control, a propensity to lie, to steal to drink', etc. Consideration now needs to be given, he suggests, to prevention, and to that most important period in the nursery 'when nobody but the nurse and mother are in attendance on the patient, and when the malady is yet in its latent state, invisible to unskilled eyes'.<sup>60</sup> The observation echoes Winslow's urgent advice in *On the Incubation of Insanity* (1846) that one needs to be constantly on one's guard, 'watching, with a vigilant eye, for the early *scintillae* of insanity'.<sup>61</sup> Child development, from the nursery onwards, should be under the watchful eye of the physician, to prevent insanity being 'surreptitiously produced as a consequence of moral mismanagement'.<sup>62</sup>

In addition to the problem of insanity being produced in otherwise healthy children by parental upbringing, the article also addresses the question of education for those children with a 'hereditary taint' who are predisposed to

insanity, arguing that careful attention in these cases can save them from the 'fearful abyss'. Two categories of child are here presented, those who are slow, and require an education addressed more to the feelings than the intellect, and those who have 'an unnatural amount of intellectual capacity'. In these latter cases, the parents, delighted by the precocity of their child, do all they can to encourage the 'excited brain', rather than keep down these 'unnatural and unhealthy manifestations', until the 'poor creature sinks prematurely into the grave' or ends its life 'in a state of positive imbecility, or inmate of a lunatic asylum'. The article once more rises to melodramatic heights:

Mothers! Fathers! Listen to the voice of experience. Remember that the precocious child is often like a meteor—it flashes in all its brilliant effulgence for a few minutes and then expires. Believe us when we say, that the seeds of fatal, incurable, melancholy disease of the brain and mind are often consequences of the mistaken fondness and excessive indulgence of those who ought to be the very last to bring about such sad results!<sup>63</sup>

Writing shortly after the publication of Dickens's *Dombey and Son*, which featured young lives and intellects being destroyed by parental ambitions, Winslow stakes out the domain of normal development, whose boundaries are to be vigorously maintained and policed by the medical profession. Too rapid development is a state to be feared rather than desired, and self-indulgence and excess become characteristics less of the child than the thoughtless parent.

Winslow's arguments are developed in a more measured way in the following volume in an article by W. M. Bush (medical superintendent of Sandywell Park, a private asylum near Cheltenham) entitled 'Juvenile Delinquency and Degeneration in the Upper Classes of Society'. Bush addresses that key figure of Victorian fiction, the wayward son; he insists, however, that such waywardness is a form of insanity, and it has been *made* by faulty education, for 'with the exception of congenital idiots, the great majority of idle and profligate young men have been made what they are by mismanagement at school'.<sup>64</sup> Bush calls for more thoughtful education for the 'genius', the 'dull', and the 'wayward' child. All three are categories of nervous disorder generally made 'incurrable' by faulty education. The article offers a helpful summary of all forms of nervous disorder from which children could suffer, from epilepsy to somnambulism, including fits of passion, which he classifies as a form of 'moral epilepsy'. As in Winslow's earlier article, the concluding emphasis is on precocity, but

targeted now at the general social culture of competition, in which, for children, ‘“scholarship” is the idol, to which thousands and thousands of children have been, and are still, sacrificed’.<sup>65</sup> His critique of ‘over-pressure of the mind’, which anticipates, in its usage, the great ‘over-pressure’ educational controversy of the 1880s, follows the example of *Dombey and Son* in linking educational practices with the new economic and social ethos of the era. Where Dickens interwove the story of the death of little Paul Dombey with that of the remorseless rise of the railways, Bush ends his article with a lament for the ‘folly of an age in which velocity is the criterion of perfection’.<sup>66</sup>

At a time when the *Lancet* and the *British Medical Journal* carried very little indeed on childhood, let alone nervous disorders in the young, and when medical text books on children’s diseases or works of Domestic Medicine focused entirely on the physical ailments of childhood, the *Journal of Psychological Medicine* led the way in talking about questions of mental disorder in the young.<sup>67</sup> In part this orientation sprang from Winslow’s own predilections, his immersion in the literary culture of the time, and his responsiveness to contemporary social concerns, which were then refracted in the journal through a medical lens. From the start the journal carried literary reviews, particularly of Dickens, for as Winslow noted in his ‘Psychological Quarterly Retrospect’ in 1856, ‘No man exercises, for good or evil, so overwhelming an influence upon the national mind and character’.<sup>68</sup> The concerns of the journal are those to be found in the general periodical press and novels of the period, particularly the emerging genre of sensation fiction. Questions of faulty education and parenting are set alongside the increasing preoccupation with the workings of heredity when considering issues of childhood. Thus Winslow extracts, for example, from the progressive *Westminster Review* (edited by George Eliot from 1851 to 1854), G. H. Lewes’s lengthy article on ‘Hereditary Influence, Animal and Human’, which, in considering the transmission of insanity from parents to children, remarks that ‘Dr Forbes Winslow might take up this topic in his valuable *Journal of Psychological Medicine* with good effect’.

Lewes, in this article, had given an overview of physiological theories of hereditary transmission and taken issue with a variety of recent fictional works which had warned that marriage should not be contemplated if a taint of insanity were to be found in the family.<sup>69</sup> Transmission to the child was not certain, Lewes had argued. He was a moderate voice, however, amidst growing popular concerns which were already quite stridently expressed, as

his examples suggest, in the fiction of the period. The *Journal of Psychological Medicine* had been quick to pick up on these ideas: it had published an article in 1850 on the work of Dr Moreau, of the Bicêtre, which had focused on hereditary transmission of insanity, and in the same volume as the Lewes article it published a long review of R. A. Morel's influential work 'On the Degeneracy of the Human Race'.<sup>70</sup> Children from their earliest infancy, Morel argued, could display evidence of 'instinctive mania', a manifestation of their 'inherited curse'.<sup>71</sup> Further reinforcing the dangers of a faulty inheritance, the volume also carried an article 'On Marriages of Consanguinity' (offering early evidence of a rising concern with cousin marriage as a source of degeneration), as well as a specially commissioned article 'On the Insanity of Early Life' by the eminent French physician Brierre de Boismont, which ended with an endorsement of the 'new method in our science' opened by Morel.<sup>72</sup> Although de Boismont argues initially that he had only seen three cases of mental derangement in children, he overturns this claim with a study of forty-two cases, focusing on hereditary transmission and incubation. Even if the onslaught of insanity is delayed until puberty or later, he maintains, it is being incubated in childhood and finds expression in bizarre behaviour and nervous disorders.

In its short career, from 1848 to 1860, the *Journal of Psychological Medicine and Mental Pathology* opened up the whole issue of mental disorder in childhood.<sup>73</sup> Although it was joined in 1853 by the rival *Journal of Mental Science*,<sup>74</sup> which was shortly to eclipse it, the latter never achieved the density of coverage of childhood psychology offered by Forbes Winslow's publication, which ranged across an entire spectrum, from mania and criminality to idiocy, suicide, religious ecstasy, and hysteria. The tension in the journal between forms of analysis which emphasized the manufacture of mental disorders, by faulty parenting or education, and the more hard-line, deterministic emphasis on hereditary transmission, was one which reflected the changing patterns of thought at the time.

The legacy of the journal's treatment of wayward youth in the upper classes can be traced in a series of articles by the great proponent of moral management, John Conolly, in the pages of the *Medical Times and Gazette* (1862), which focused on 'juvenile insanity' in the upper classes.<sup>75</sup> While the disruptive children of the poor are speedily sent to asylums, Conolly argues, those of the upper classes are kept behind closed doors, where their maladies are allowed to develop unchecked. Waywardness and eccentricity, he warns, are symptoms of insanity which require medical

treatment. Insanity in the young is not, as was previously thought, a rare occurrence, and can arise through 'various kinds of ill-treatment in any part of childhood or youth' as well as hereditary conditions or accidental injuries.<sup>76</sup>

As befits his background in moral management, the emphasis is firmly on medical supervision, from early childhood, indeed from the cradle onwards, and the possibility of cure.<sup>77</sup> With reference to boys, he observes: 'No juvenile peculiarity, or waywardness or violence, should induce despair' (he is less sanguine with regard to girls, who tend to suffer more 'paroxysms of acute mania' and more obstinate 'moral perversions' than boys).<sup>78</sup> In what appears an early diagnosis of the (much disputed) condition now known as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, he discusses the problems of boys whose powers of 'exercising and directing the attention' fail to develop, and who become impossible to teach: 'Perpetual restlessness opposes itself to all improvement, and attempts to control it induce paroxysms of violence like the paroxysms of mania'.<sup>79</sup> Conolly is exceedingly critical of the treatment of this class of boys, who are subjected to 'both bodily and mental torture'. They are 'sent from school to school, removed from masters considered too indulgent, and transferred to others praised for more strictness. . . . if the memory is weak it is simply overloaded by forced application to subjects beyond early comprehension, or by the infliction of bodily pain; of all which the results are seldom other than detrimental both to the understanding and the heart'.<sup>80</sup> Although Conolly does not mention specifics, he possibly has in mind the court case in 1860 where a schoolmaster was sentenced to four years for manslaughter. He had beaten a boy repeatedly with a rope and stick, causing his death. In his defence he had claimed that the boy was 'actuated by a determination not to learn anything', and feeling that 'it was absolutely necessary that he should master the boy's propensities, he resolved, with great regret, to do so by severe punishment'.<sup>81</sup>

Like his friend Charles Dickens, who had repeatedly exposed in his novels the horrors of what passed for schooling, Conolly writes with crusading zeal. His subject matter extends imperceptibly from the treatment of boys with disorders to all education. As with Guthrie, one can sense the ways in which personal experience is fuelling the sense of grievance here: the 'generality of mankind', he claims, look back on their school days with 'detestation'.<sup>82</sup> In his brief autobiographical memoir of his school days, published after his death by his decidedly unsympathetic son-in-law, Henry Maudsley, Conolly asks whether 'the years from six to sixteen are usually so profitless and unhappy'

as they were for him. Sent out as a border from the age of 6, he notes that 'in all these years my schoolmaster, the vicar, never, that I remember, gave me any assistance apart from blows on the head'. For Maudsley, proponent of a sterner, more deterministic model of psychiatry, such reflections merely show Conolly's inability to accept 'the stern and painful necessities of life', and reveal his 'feminine type' of mind.<sup>83</sup> Conolly, by contrast, writes with concern of the mismanagement of youth, whereby boys who could 'with the advantage of proper care, grow up into useful and good men' are ruined by foolish parents and harsh schooling, so that they 'too often end a career of mischievous idleness disgracefully'.<sup>84</sup> The type of boy with which Conolly is concerned, one who perhaps reads less well than his peers, finds his companions in the stables and shuns refined pleasures for the 'quiet enjoyment of idleness, of malt liquor, and of smoking', is the very embodiment of the scrapegrace son to be found in the Victorian novel. As Conolly notes, cases of this kind 'are to be met with in many country-houses in every county in England'.<sup>85</sup> The diagnosis is deeply sympathetic, but the step has been taken, nonetheless, to transform a social problem into a medical one, to translate the idle son into a victim of mental disorder.

With respect to girls, Conolly focuses less on faulty education and more on the problems of the uterine system, following the accepted line that the female body is more subject to the workings of its reproductive system than the male. The age range here is younger, from 7 to 12, and where disorders do emerge at puberty, Conolly argues that it will generally be found that there were symptoms earlier, often from the age of 3, such as 'childish waywardness, and peculiar timidity, frequent reverie or customary absence of mind, and paroxysms of irritability'.<sup>86</sup> The defining characteristic he focuses on, however, is passion. Parents and teachers often contend, without success, with passionate female children, not realizing that the girl with whom they 'have waged an unsuccessful war' might have something more serious wrong with her than a violent temper. Governesses are particularly ill-equipped to deal with such girls since they 'confound faults arising from malady with those indicative of wickedness'.<sup>87</sup> The passionate child of religious tracts is here reclaimed as a sufferer from insanity who, with judicious treatment, can be redeemed. As it is, the cases are so mismanaged that when the 'young ladies arrive at the age of seventeen or eighteen they are found to be too eccentric to be produced in society, and too troublesome to remain with their families'.<sup>88</sup> At present, however, there were no asylums or private residences suited to dealing with these problem children.



In the various case studies Conolly outlines, he refers to sexual precocity, but then carefully distances himself from interpretations assigning a primary causative role to sexuality: such manifestations are generally ‘the result, and not the primary cause, of mental and bodily disorder’. He launches a strident attack on medical interference in these matters, on applications ‘of doubtful propriety’, or ‘operations equally cruel and inefficacious’.<sup>89</sup> As Elaine Showalter has shown, Isaac Baker Brown was performing clitoridectomies in London between between 1859 and 1866, when he was expelled from the Obstetrical Society.<sup>90</sup> His operations were designed to cure insanity, and were performed on girls as young as 10.<sup>91</sup> Conolly’s criticism precedes the public outcry in 1866, but, as his comments suggest, Baker Brown and his followers seem to have been pursuing a practice widespread on the Continent:<sup>92</sup>

Recourse to these outrageous measures are, unfortunately, generally urged by the mothers of the juvenile patients, whom a residence abroad has rendered insensible to what our English Physicians regard as assaults on the modesty of woman; and the defenceless daughters are removed from London to capitals where they find more professional subservience can be commanded.<sup>93</sup>

The picture painted is a disturbing one, of fashionable mothers as the primary agents in their daughters’ mutilation. Although it is impossible to tell how widespread this practice might have been, it does put into a new possible context the swift removal of a girl to the Continent if an inconvenient love interest threatened.

What Conolly’s comments do suggest is the readiness of mothers to believe that sexuality lay at the heart of their daughters’ disruptive behaviour, even in the face of medical advice to the contrary. The example highlights the complex intersection of popular cultural beliefs and emerging medical perspectives in the field of child psychiatry. For Conolly, these mothers offer the ultimate example of parental mismanagement; his anger is focused not on the unscrupulous medical practitioners who carried out the operations but on the mothers who, he claims, requested them. His answer to the problem of the disruptive child is thus increased medical supervision: care of a child from the cradle onwards by a physician familiar with both the family and ancestral history, thus on the watch for the first signs of eccentricity. It is a formulation which picks up on the increasing concern with hereditary transmission, whilst preserving the optimistic principles of moral management as the dominant message.

## Insanity in Utero

Conolly's key intervention on the question of child insanity, made at the end of his career, contrasts sharply in tone and orientation with that of the young James Crichton Browne in 'Psychical Diseases of Early Life', written two years previously. Where Conolly, in his concerns with social causation and parental mismanagement, looked back to earlier models of psychiatry, Crichton Browne, in his strident proclamation of the principles of inherited insanity, looks forward to the paradigms which were to dominate the second half of the century. His aim is to demonstrate that 'insanity does occur in utero, in infancy, and childhood, and this is by no means so uncommon as supposed'.<sup>94</sup> Unlike Conolly, who could draw on years of practice, Crichton Browne was still a student and hence takes his evidence not from his own observations but from brief references in earlier works and the pages of the *Journal of Psychological Medicine*.<sup>95</sup> The effect, however, is to recast dramatically understanding of the child mind. Far from being immune from most forms of mental disorder, the child is now seen as prey to all possible adult conditions: 'From the end of the first dentition, up to puberty, we may state, as a general principle, that there is a liability to every psychical disease from which the adult may suffer, together with certain conditions peculiar to that stage of life.'<sup>96</sup> Crichton Browne's work is an unstable mixture of the old and the new. He gives complete credence, for example, to ancient theories of maternal impressions, listing numerous examples of the ways in which frights and fears suffered during pregnancy could be registered on the child. Thus a mother, for example, who was terrified that her children would be born blind gave birth to five babies with different forms of eye defects. He also, however, picks up on the work of Samuel Gridley Howe in Massachusetts on inbreeding, intemperance, and the transmission of idiocy: where the adults of seventeen families had intermarried, of the ninety-five children, 'forty-four were idiotic, twelve were scrofulous and puny, one was deaf, and one a dwarf'.<sup>97</sup> To this he adds the findings of his own father, W. A. F. Browne, that drunkenness is transmitted down the generations.<sup>98</sup> It is not only alcoholic addiction, however, that can harm the unborn child, but also excessive mental exertion or indeed its contrary, excessive mental idleness, which may be reproduced in the son 'in a morbid form'. Crichton Browne concludes: 'In short, any departure, during the past lives of the parents, from the strict and

immutable code of natural laws, may at conception, and during utero gestation, hurtfully affect their offspring.<sup>99</sup> This scientific and secular reinterpretation of the harsh Old Testament ruling that the 'sins of the fathers' will be visited on the sons is quite unflinching in the severity of its judgements. To the traditional sins must be added those of working too hard: any deviation from a balanced life, not just at the point of conception, but at any point during the previous life, might seriously harm the mental health of future offspring. The new moralism of 'natural law' appears quite paralysing in its effects. Crichton Browne shows little interest in the conditions under which children are raised; his concerns lie almost exclusively with parental mismanagement before conception.

The forms of insanity children are now deemed liable to suffer are legion. Crichton Browne draws heavily on Esquirol's theories of monomania to outline a panoply of childhood mental disorders, including homicidal mania, kleptomania, pyromania, theomania and demonomania, as well as pantophobia, 'an exalted or diseased state of the instinct of self-preservation' which is 'often accompanied by delusions' and can cause such 'intense misery, that suicide is often resorted to as a means of relief'. Child night terrors, as diagnosed by Charles West, he regards as 'a transient species of pantophobia'.<sup>100</sup> Other categories he explores are moral insanity, mania, and melancholia, which can also result in child suicide. He is particularly emphatic with regard to the disturbing sexual propensities to be found even in infant life. Nymphomania, he announces, can be found in children as young as 3. His readers are asked to redraw entirely their map of childhood: 'The mind of childhood, that which we are accustomed to look upon as emblematic of all that is simple, and pure, and innocent, may be assailed by the most loathsome of psychical disorders, viz., satyriasis or nymphomania; the monomania affecting the sexual instinct.'<sup>101</sup>

Crichton Browne gives direct expression to his own sense of disgust; his medical rewriting of childhood is designed to tear away the veil of sentiment which has so far obscured understanding of childhood. His model, however, is a new physiological version of the Christian doctrine of original sin, which had, in opposition to Romantic visions of childhood innocence, given rise to the grim evangelical conceptions of childhood as articulated, for example, by Hannah More. 'It was a fundamental error in Christians', she argued, 'to consider children as innocent beings, whose little weaknesses may perhaps want some correction, rather than as beings who bring into the world a corrupt nature and evil predispositions.'<sup>102</sup> Crichton Browne assigns

unnerving somatic specificity to these vaguely couched warnings, asking the reader to open his or her imagination to the possibility of all conceivable moral or mental perversions operating within the mind and body of the child.

Not only can the child suffer all adult forms of mental disorder in Crichton Browne's framework, it is also more prone to specific forms. 'Monomania, or delusional insanity', he announces, 'we believe to be more common during infancy and childhood than at any other period of life.'<sup>103</sup> The verdict marks a significant shift in ideas of childhood, for it turns the imaginative world of the child into the very definition of insanity. To prove his point, Crichton Browne ransacks recent literary texts, including Anna Jameson's *Commonplace Book*, a memoir of Hartley Coleridge, and Henry Morley's *Life of Girolamo Cardano*. The move highlights once more the close interconnections between emerging theories of child psychiatry and contemporary literary, social, and religious culture. Unlike Leonard Guthrie, Crichton Browne is not necessarily a sympathetic reader of these texts, turning them into evidence for his theories of pathology. His borrowings underscore, however, the parallel developments of these diverse cultural fields. As the following sections will explore, Crichton Browne's concerns with the figures of the passionate child or the liar mirror those of contemporary domestic and religious advice literature, whilst his preoccupation with the imaginative qualities of childhood, and its terrors and delusions, draws on a whole cluster of recent literary texts which focused on the terrors of childhood.

Crichton Browne was writing at a point of transition with reference to theories of the child mind—just after Darwin had published the *Origin*, but before the emergence of an evolutionary-based psychology or psychiatry. As we have seen, heredity was already an issue, but the question of animal descent, which was to inform Maudsley's depiction of the 'Insanity of Early Life' in 1867, had not yet affected theories of the child mind.<sup>104</sup> In the field of psychology, Herbert Spencer had published the first edition of his *Principles of Psychology* in 1855, preparing the way for thinking about the structures of the mind itself, and not just hereditary 'taints', as the product of long historical processes. Understandings of the child mind became increasingly historicized as psychiatrists and psychologists sought to explain child life by reference to earlier primitive or animal forms. Anthropologists, conversely, drew on ideas of the child mind to explain primitive cultures. Ideas of recapitulation, which had existed in various forms since the Romantic period, were given popular

instantiation in Ernst Haeckel's influential formulation in 1866 of the biological principle that 'ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny', or the life of the individual follows that of the race.<sup>105</sup> Psychologists and psychiatrists now focused increasingly on the ways in which the stages of childhood re-enacted the forms of our animal or 'savage' ancestors' lives. Thus Crichton Browne himself was to warn parents in 1883 that they 'should remember that children are not little nineteenth-century men and women, but diamond editions of very remote ancestors, full of savage whims and impulses, and savage rudiments of virtue'.<sup>106</sup>

Crichton Browne was to become a major figure in the emerging post-Darwinian field of child psychiatry, which encompassed the work of Henry Maudsley as well as lesser-known figures such as Charles West, J. L. H. Langdon-Down, George Savage, and T. S. Clouston. His public prominence was further enhanced by the crusading role he undertook in the 1880s with reference to the 'over-pressure' debates in education. In his early essay he laid out many of the areas of concern that were to be developed over the following decades, from sexuality to suicide. He also looked back, however, to many of the issues first raised in the Romantic era.

Long before Freud, as this chapter has shown, there was interest in the mental disorders of childhood. In the first half of the nineteenth century there was a reluctance to admit that children, in their immaturity, could suffer from the same disorders which might ravage the adult mind. Where cases were given, there was a tendency to offer causal explanations which focused less on the child mind itself than on faulty parenting or teaching. The publication of Crichton Browne's 1860 essay marked a turning point, with his dramatic declaration that insanity could occur 'in utero', and increasingly discussions of child mental disturbances now focused on hereditary transmission, a tendency strengthened with the development of evolutionary psychology and psychiatry in the post-*Origin* era.

All these medical explorations of nervous disorders in the child were part of a wider cultural preoccupation with the workings of the child mind. It was no coincidence that Forbes Winslow started his *Journal of Psychological Medicine*, with its detailed engagement with disorders in childhood, at the period which saw the publication of the first great Victorian novels of child development. *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* had been published the preceding year, and *Dombey and Son*, published in parts from October 1846 to April 1848, came out in volume form in 1848, to be followed shortly by *David Copperfield* (May 1849–November 1850). It is fitting that Wordsworth's *Prelude*, his epic on the

growth of an individual mind which he had laboured on for so many years, should finally be published posthumously in 1850.<sup>107</sup> The fascination with the development of mind from childhood, initiated in the Romantic era, comes of age in the mid-nineteenth century, just at the point when medical science first starts to address in earnest issues concerning mental states within the young.

Forbes Winslow opened up debates on child mental disorders in his journal, and Crichton Browne, twelve years later, drew on these materials, together with contemporary literary texts, to create his own synthesis, which looked back to earlier preoccupations with imagination, for example, and forward to the greater emphasis placed on heredity and sexuality in post-Darwinian figurations of the child mind. In the following sections I take the particular constellation of ideas in Crichton Browne's essay, relating to the interlinked areas of passion, lies, imagination, and terror in childhood, and explore how they were addressed in the literary culture of the period. As the case of Guthrie showed so clearly, literary texts, with their detailed explorations of the child mind, helped to frame the categories and understandings of Victorian medical science, even if, as in the case of Crichton Browne, the readings of these texts were not in themselves particularly sympathetic. Focusing specifically on the mid-century, the sections will nonetheless also suggest the ways in which understanding of these areas was transformed over the period, so that interpretations of the youthful imagination, or the transgressive qualities of a lie, came to hold a very different value in the culture of the 1890s. The first section, on night terrors, offers an explicit case study, moving from the instantiation of a new medical diagnosis in the mid-century to consider both literary precursors in the Romantic period and subsequent late nineteenth-century reinterpretations of childhood fear within the framework of evolutionary psychology. The history of interpretations of child terror offers a map for understanding both the complex interactions of medical and literary culture and the overall shifts in interpretations of the child mind from the Romantic period to the *fin de siècle*.

## 2

# Fears, Phantasms, and Night Terrors

To establish his claim that children were more susceptible to monomania or delusional insanity than adults, Crichton Browne drew both on medical works and a cluster of recent literary texts. At the heart of his argument lay the image of the child stricken by visions of phantasms and Charles West's recent diagnosis of 'night terrors'. Until the mid-nineteenth century, medical textbooks on children's diseases had focused virtually entirely on physical ailments. In his 1848 text, *Lectures on the Diseases of Infancy and Childhood*, Charles West introduced the concept of night terrors, a seemingly psychological disorder which he traced to a firmly somatic origin in digestive dysfunction. By the third edition in 1854, however, the concept had been radically reframed to lead seamlessly into his new section on mental disorders in childhood. The revision, in keeping with the preoccupation with the possibilities of child insanity in the *Journal of Psychological Medicine* during these years, marks a decisive shift as the inner workings of the child mind are opened up to medical interrogation and intervention. The question of child terror or fear was a peculiarly engrossing one since it ran so directly counter to constructions of blithe innocence, or associationist models of childhood, which stressed the lack of accumulated experience in the child mind which might give rise to such extreme emotions.

Romantic literary texts, as I will suggest later, had addressed experiences of child fear, but the issue seems to re-emerge with a peculiar strength in the literary culture of the mid-century. The literary works from which Crichton Browne draws his arguments are all taken from a narrow band of years, between the first and third editions of West's text: Anna Jameson's *Commonplace Book* (1854), Henry Morley's *The Life of Girolamo Cardano* (1854), and the memoir of Hartley Coleridge (1851).<sup>1</sup> To this list of texts

one must add the definitive, most haunting literary evocation of child fear in the nineteenth century, *Jane Eyre* (1847). It is impossible at this distance to establish precise lines of influence, although the example of Crichton Browne, a medic diligently mining a wide range of recent literature, shows clearly the close interconnections of literary and medical culture at this time. What emerges from all these texts, however, is a vision of the child mind as more intricate and complex, and indeed more fragile and open to suffering, than earlier models had suggested.

In her essay 'A Revelation of Childhood', published in her *Commonplace Book* of 1854, Anna Jameson demanded: 'how much do we know of that which lies in the minds of children? We only know what we put there.'<sup>2</sup> She attacks educators who regard childhood as 'so much material placed in our hands to be fashioned to a certain form according to our will or our prejudices' and as merely a preparatory state to be left behind. Instead she wishes to explore 'that inward, busy, perpetual activity of the growing faculties and feelings' of which, paradoxically, a child can give no account:

To lead children by questionings to think about their own identity, or observe their own feelings, is to teach them to be artificial. To waken self-consciousness before you awaken conscience is the beginning of incalculable mischief. Introspection is always, as a habit, unhealthy; introspection in childhood, fatally so.<sup>3</sup>

In a sense, Jameson is following the practice of which she complains, putting onto childhood her own preconceptions—childhood is here defined as a state of unself-consciousness. To reflect on experience or on one's own identity is to forfeit the state of childhood, to become instead 'artificial'. (One is reminded here of Mrs Reed's impossible injunction to *Jane Eyre* to become 'more natural' and to acquire a 'more childlike disposition'.)<sup>4</sup> The language of disease seeps disturbingly into the description; the fatal habit here described is not, however, that customary cause of alarm, masturbation, but rather the act of reflection. A child is only permitted to remain in that hallowed category if it does not examine its own feelings. Despite Jameson's criticisms of prior models of childhood, she herself remains committed to a construction which gives to the adult the sole power of articulating the inner feelings of childhood. The problem, faced by medical commentators or literary figures alike, of how to access, or give voice, to the interior world of the child, is here resolved in the adult's favour, giving authority to both literary and autobiographical reconstructions of childhood emotions.



Jameson challenges ideas of the child as merely an empty vessel waiting to be filled. She subscribes instead to a model of childhood innocence which differentiates the world of the child from that of the adult. This is not, however, the blithe innocence and superior wisdom of Wordsworth's child in 'We are Seven'. The image of childhood Jameson proceeds to unveil is one dominated by fear: 'fear of darkness and supernatural influences. As long as I can remember anything, I remember those horrors of my infancy. How they had been awakened I do not know.'<sup>5</sup> These horrors are both inexplicable and lifelong, enduring in the memory as the defining modality of childhood. Originally vague in form, these 'haunting, thrilling, stifling terrors' start to take shape under the impact of literary illustrations on her young imagination. She is tormented by the figure of Apollyon looming over Christian from an edition of *Pilgrim's Progress*, and by a spectre summoned by an engraving of the ghost in *Hamlet*: 'O that spectre! for three years it followed me up and down the dark staircase, or stood by my bed: only the blessed light had power to exorcise it.' This spectre is not a static form but one that moves, its 'supernatural light' filling the dark spaces that surround her. It is less threatening, however, than other less identifiable spirits, and here she turns to the Bible to create a language of articulation:

But worse, perhaps, were certain phantasms without shape,—things like the vision in Job—'*A spirit passed before my face; it stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof*':—and if not intelligible voices, there were strange unaccountable sounds filling the air around with a mysterious life.<sup>6</sup>

It is unclear whether the Book of Job gave form to her fears in childhood, or whether as an adult she is invoking the Bible both to explain and to give cultural and historical authority to these troubling, largely inexplicable, fears.

Jameson is at pains to point out that she was not, as the above might suggest, a timid, unadventurous child: 'in daylight I was not only fearless, but audacious'. Light and dark produce two different creatures. Drawing on her romantic heritage, she defines her terrors as 'visionary sufferings', thus elevating them to signs of romantic sensibility. They 'pursued' her, she notes, until the age of 12, and could easily have affected her mental stability for life: 'If I had not possessed a strong constitution and strong understanding, which rejected and contemned my own fears, even while they shook me, I had been destroyed.'<sup>7</sup> A Victorian commitment to self-control is here brought to bear on the workings of the unconscious mind. Jameson's verdict shares the spirit of the discussion of Hartley Coleridge's childhood

in the *Edinburgh Review* (1851), cited by Crichton Browne, which traced the ‘unhealthy’ way in which his childhood visions had been allowed to dominate his mental development: ‘it is not a predominance of intellect, but a deficiency of will, which banishes us from the world of reality, and converts into a gilded prison the palace-halls of the imagination’.<sup>8</sup> Great artists like Shakespeare or Dante, the reviewer argues, ‘ever continue lords over themselves, and . . . the Spirits whom they summon go and come alike at their command’.<sup>9</sup>

This emphasis on the power of will, and the ability to control one’s visions, forms part of the early Victorian response to mental illness, as epitomized in John Barlow’s text *Man’s Power over Himself to Prevent or Control Insanity* (1843).<sup>10</sup> Barlow himself was not a physician, but he drew heavily on the works of John Conolly and other medical theorists, taking up their arguments that we are all subject to visions and delusions, but only those of weak mind succumb and enter a state of insanity:

He who has given a proper direction to the intellectual force, and thus obtained an early command over the bodily organ by habituating it to processes of calm reasoning, remains sane amid all the vagaries of sense; while he who has been the slave, rather than the master of his animal nature, listens to its dictates without question even when distorted by disease—and is mad. A fearful result of an uncultivated childhood!<sup>11</sup>

Under this construction, adult sanity is dependent on the ruthless control of imaginative visions within childhood.

Jameson clearly subscribes to similar theories on the importance of cultivating strength of mind in childhood. Her argument shifts abruptly to a book she has read on the treatment of the insane, unfortunately not identified,<sup>12</sup> which urges absolute veracity as a curative principle:

Now, it is a good sanitary principle, that what is curative is preventive; and that an unhealthy state of mind, leading to madness, may, in some organisations, be induced by that sort of uncertainty and perplexity which grows up where the mind has not been accustomed to truth in its external relations.<sup>13</sup>

How exact attention to truth could have cured or prevented Jameson’s fears as described in her essay is unclear. What is clear, however, is that she is directly placing her experiences within the context of childhood breakdown: a lesser mind would have succumbed to madness. Drawing on contemporary discourses of insanity, she makes the logical leap herself, to place her childhood fears within the frame of incipient insanity.

Jameson's account of her childhood sufferings has strong parallels in two texts published a few years before. Reading Jameson, it is difficult not to make an immediate link to Brontë's *Jane Eyre* of 1847 where the child Jane, locked in the Red Room after her outbreak of passionate anger, experiences terror that her Uncle Reed might arise from the dead. Her terror climaxes with the sight of a light gleaming on the wall:

I can now conjecture readily that this streak of light was, in all likelihood, a gleam from a lantern, carried by some one across the lawn; but then, prepared as my mind was for horror, shaken as my nerves were by agitation, I thought the swift-darting beam was a herald of some coming vision from another world. My heart beat thick, my head grew hot; a sound filled my ears, which I deemed the rushing of wings: something seemed near me; I was oppressed, suffocated: endurance broke down—I uttered a wild, involuntary cry.<sup>14</sup>

The episode is given within the frame of an adult, objective explanation—the lantern being carried across the lawn—but the emotional force overrides such rationalism, establishing for generations of future readers an image of Victorian childhood as one defined by terror. Yet the seemingly irrational outbursts of emotion are seen, nonetheless, in Brontë's text as a fitting response to an unjust social and familial order, where the voice of the child holds no sway. Where Jameson sets her childhood terror solely in terms of her own responses to texts, illustrations, and the play of light and dark, Brontë shows how susceptibility has been created by adult injustice.

The eruption of *Jane Eyre* into the Victorian cultural consciousness was matched, in tenor if not effect, by Harriet Martineau's *Household Education* (1849), a form of manual for child-rearing, based on Martineau's own childhood recollections. Brontë, on reading it, was reported to have said that it was like meeting her own 'fetch', or ghost, although it is unclear whether she read the articles serialized prior to *Jane Eyre* in the *People's Journal*, or the book published afterwards in 1849.<sup>15</sup> Martineau, like Jameson, insists that parents know little of the sufferings that pass within a child's mind: 'No creature is so intensely reserved as a proud and timid child: and the cases are few in which the parents know anything of the agonies of its little heart, the spasms of its nerves, the soul-sickness of its days, the horrors of its nights.'<sup>16</sup> She speaks of her own sufferings of which she never told her family: 'I had a dream at four years old which terrified me to such an excess that I cannot now recal [*sic*] it without a beating of the heart.'<sup>17</sup> Some of her worst fears were of lights and shadows—the magic lantern, or the shadows

from the lamplighter's torch: 'Many an infant is terrified at the shadow of a perforated night-lamp, with its round spaces of light. Many a child lives in perpetual terror of the eyes of portraits on the walls,—or of some grotesque shape in the pattern of the paper-hangings.'<sup>18</sup> Paradoxically, the night lamp, which was designed to comfort the child, only increases her terror. As in the Jameson and Brontë examples, flickering half light, and the uncertain domain between light and dark, evoke states of imaginative fear.<sup>19</sup>

Henry Morley, Dickens's friend and stalwart contributor to *Household Words*, reinforced this preoccupation with childhood terrors and visions with his 1854 *Life of Girolamo Cardano*, a biography of a Renaissance writer and physician, refracted through mid-nineteenth-century concerns. Between Cardano's fourth and seventh year, we are told, 'the excitement of his nervous system caused a condition perhaps not altogether rare in children: phantoms haunted him'. Benign processions of castles, animals, and knights are followed, however, by years of terrors, with nightmares focusing on a cock with red wings and disturbed sleep, but 'There were none by to understand the beatings of the young heart and the ponderings of the excited mind'. Lest the reader should be 'sceptical' or 'credulous', Morley adds his own footnote to inform us that 'This account fits accurately to my own experience. During the same period of childhood I rarely fell asleep till I had received the visit of a crowd of visionary shapes that were not by any means agreeable.'<sup>20</sup> Such admissions, by a writer who in this case had trained as a physician, were made possible by a changing cultural climate in which literary and autobiographical works focused on the visionary sufferings of childhood.

Latter-day Romantic writers also contributed at this period to the growing fascination with the visions and tortured inner world of the child. Leigh Hunt, publishing his *Autobiography* in 1850, spoke of the ways in which his older brother had played upon his horror of the dark, and of dreadful faces in books, arguing that 'I dwell the more on this seemingly petty circumstance, because such things are no petty ones to a sensitive child. My brother had no idea of the mischief they did to me. Perhaps the mention of them will save mischief to others. They helped to morbidize all that was weak in my temperament, and cost me many a bitter night.'<sup>21</sup> The medically derived term 'morbidize' suggests that Leigh Hunt, like Jameson, considered his tortured visions in the light of incipient mental disorder. De Quincey, writing 'Suspiria de Profundis' in 1845 (a text he subsequently reworked for his *Autobiographic Sketches*, 1853–4), intensified these projections of the

terrified, suffering child. The text would offer at points, De Quincey commented in his General Preface, 'nothing on the stage but a solitary infant, and its solitary combat with grief—a mighty darkness, and sorrow without a voice'.<sup>22</sup> His work is an attempt to conquer that inarticulacy, to give voice to the powerless, solitary infant, who still inhabits his mind.

In part, his aim is achieved through the exploration of the visions which overwhelmed him in his early years. On the loss of his beloved elder sister, at the age of 6, he enters into a trance state whilst standing beside her corpse. He feels as if he is lifted up on billows pursuing the throne of God, involved in a flight and pursuit which involves a 'dreadful antagonism between God and death'. Like Martineau, he believes he is still tortured by these childhood visions: 'shadowy meanings even yet continue to exercise and torment, in dreams, the deciphering oracle within me'.<sup>23</sup> Coming from the celebrated 'Opium Eater', these reflections carry a rather different freight of meaning from the other examples considered here. In part the work offers a Romantic celebration of the creative power of the imagination, but it also, in line with the other texts, insists powerfully on the imaginative sufferings of childhood, and the infant's capacity to step outside of itself into a dream state which becomes in turn part of the internal structure of the developing mind.

The cumulative effect of these texts is to create an image of Victorian childhood dominated by dreams, phantoms, and terror. If one turns to nineteenth-century medical texts, however, one finds virtual silence, until this period, on the subject of childhood fears or terrors. The Victorians were deluged by domestic medicine and child-rearing manuals, but none before 1848 appears to devote space to child night terrors or nervous disorders. Manuals on child-rearing and diseases covered the practicalities of nursing, feeding, and physical illnesses, whilst general texts on domestic medicine had entries on nightmare or incubus, without reference to children.<sup>24</sup> One partial exception was Robert Macnish's popular 1830 text *The Philosophy of Sleep*. Although this work does not have a section on child dreams, it notes at one point that children are more apt to have dreams of terror than adults, many of them leaving an indelible impression.<sup>25</sup> Although children can have visions of joy, childhood 'is also tortured by scenes more painful and overwhelming than almost ever fall to the share of after-life'.<sup>26</sup> The dream state itself is also characterized as one where judgement is weak, as in children. Macnish thus establishes an important continuum between childhood and the dream state. He also, influentially, breaks down the barriers between dreaming and waking, exploring the categories of daymare, waking dreams,

and reverie, all of which he sees as closely allied.<sup>27</sup> Nightmares, he argues, can occur when awake, and he himself had undergone ‘the greatest tortures, being haunted by spectres, hags, and every sort of phantom’ whilst in full possession of his faculties.<sup>28</sup> Macnish’s account of dreams and waking nightmares was highly influential in the Victorian period: Dickens owned a copy and quoted him in his 1851 letter on dreams, while the Revd Brontë notes approvingly against the entry on nightmare in the family copy of Graham’s *Modern Domestic Medicine* that ‘Dr McNish . . . has justly described the sensations of Night mare, under some modifications—as being amongst the most horrible that oppress human nature—an inability to move, during the paroxysm—dreadful visions of ghosts etc’.<sup>29</sup>

Despite the strong interest, from the Romantic period onwards, in the phenomena of dreams and apparitions, the first time child night terror seems to figure as a category in an English medical manual is Charles West’s *Lectures on the Diseases of Infancy and Childhood* (1848). West at this point was Senior Physician to the Royal Infirmary for Children, and also a lecturer at the Middlesex Hospital. He was already campaigning for the establishment of a hospital for sick children, which was to open in Great Ormond Street in 1852, with strong support from Dickens.<sup>30</sup> The lecture on Night Terrors starts abruptly with a graphic depiction of a child who awakes in terror: ‘The child will be found sitting up in its bed, crying out as if in an agony of fear, “Oh dear! Oh dear! take it away! father! mother!” while terror is depicted on its countenance, and it does not recognise its parents’.<sup>31</sup> West gives various case histories, including those where terrors can occur nightly over a period of months. In his descriptions, night terror is closely allied with nightmare but distinguished by its repetitive nature, the fact that the child might not have fully gained consciousness when it cries out, and the sheer level of panic and terror aroused (usually, he suggests, associated with an object which has caused alarm rather than a dream itself). Despite this emphasis on the psychological nature of the trauma, he is nonetheless firm that the cause is physiological—intestinal disorders. In this he is following in a long-established tradition which sought to explain nightmares according to a purely physiological function.<sup>32</sup> From this point on, night terrors became a standard entry in domestic medical manuals and works on child-rearing, usually citing West.<sup>33</sup> Interestingly, despite the close correlations with adult nightmare, it is a diagnosis applied specifically to children, and remains so in current medicine, where the term ‘night terrors’ is still applied.<sup>34</sup>

In 1854 West published a third, revised edition of his text, including an additional section on 'Disorders of the Mind in Childhood, and Idiocy'. Although he retains the original explanation for night terrors as caused by digestive problems, he then moves straight into considering 'some other forms of *disorder of the highest functions of the brain* in early life'.<sup>35</sup> Without acknowledgement, his form of diagnosis has shifted, and night terrors has become one of a new category of child mental disorders. He notes that if he knew where to send his readers to consult writings on this topic, he would feel his duty was discharged. As it is, it is important to prevent his students 'from going into practice with the impression that perversion of the intellect may not occur in the child as well as the adult'. His aim is now to convince his readers that 'perversion of the intellect or of the moral faculties, as distinguished from mere feebleness of mind, is met with in childhood as well as in adult age, and deserves to be regarded and to be treated as insanity no less in the one case than in the other'.<sup>36</sup> West has taken a significant step towards the medicalization of the child mind, offering one of the first explicit treatments in an English textbook of childhood mental disorder. The dream state as defined by Macnish and others, where intellectual control is in abeyance, has become a defining characteristic of the child mind, and by extension, of a state of insanity.<sup>37</sup> In childhood, West notes,

the intellectual powers are imperfectly developed, the feelings and the impulses are stronger, or, at least, less under control, than they become with advancing years... Mental disorders, then, show themselves in the exaggeration of those feelings, the uncontrollable character of those impulses; in the ability or the indisposition to follow that advice or be swayed by those motives which govern other children.<sup>38</sup>

Mental disorder, the loss of intellectual or emotional control, is thus defined as a form of a heightened state of childhood. This shift in perceptions of the child mind marks a crucial turning point, for it is now possible to see in the child's very freedom from adult mental constraint the groundings of insanity. The name of this disorder, West suggests, is moral insanity, although it should be noted, given the role night terrors played in the formulation of his theories of child insanity, that in James Prichard's original definition of moral insanity the 'morbid perversion of the natural feelings' was deemed to exist independently of any insane illusion or hallucination. Moral insanity is clearly a diagnosis, however, that Mrs Reed would have been very happy to apply to that 'unnatural' child, Jane Eyre.<sup>39</sup>

What made West change his mind as to the aetiology of night terrors? In part it might have been the establishment of the Great Ormond St Hospital, which permitted him to observe children for longer stretches, and overnight, although his casebooks do not have any individual entries on night terrors.<sup>40</sup> Equally, the foundation of the *Journal of Psychological Medicine and Mental Pathology* and the new focus it offered on childhood nervous disorders could possibly have played a role, although West noted that he felt at a loss in thinking of other works in the field to cite.<sup>41</sup> More broadly, did the new cultural climate established by those impassioned literary works, with their depictions of the imaginative fears suffered in early childhood, also have an effect? In the texts of both Martineau and Jameson the suggestion is openly made that the activities of an overactive imagination in childhood can lead to insanity. West's lectures transform popular perception into medical diagnosis, giving the authority of science to the idea of the mentally disturbed child.

The conjunction between the literary and the medical is confirmed in James Crichton Browne's 1860 essay, where he draws on Jameson's autobiographical recollections of 'the shaping spirit of imagination' which 'haunted' her inner life in childhood, and accounts of Hartley Coleridge's invention of an imaginary land as a child, together with West's work on night terrors, to argue that the delusions of childhood lead to mental derangement in maturity. Supplementing West's account of night terrors with details from his own practice, he argues that 'Many cases of infantile insanity owe their origin to fear'.<sup>42</sup> Night terrors and daydreams are now firmly placed on a continuum which leads directly to mental derangement, setting the agenda for the development of child psychiatry in the later decades of the century.

In both literary and medical terms the years of the mid-century marked a transition in ideas of childhood. To understand these changes, and the subsequent history of ideas of night terrors in the nineteenth century, we need to take into account earlier Romantic explorations of childhood fear, which fed in to these mid-century examples. Romantic writers were of course deeply preoccupied with the world of dreams, and as Alan Richardson and Jennifer Ford have shown, were also intensely engaged with exploring theories of the mind which might account for such phenomena.<sup>43</sup> Part of these explorations encompassed child terrors. In the opening pages of Maria Edgeworth's *Harrington* (1817) we are given the trauma of the 6-year-old Harrington's encounter with Simon the Jew, an old clothes collector, whose face is caught in the flare of a torch.<sup>44</sup> Harrington consequently suffers terrors day and night. As in



Martineau's account, the inner life of the child is dominated by fears, but in Edgeworth's narrative these terrifying visions are assigned to an exterior cause. The hard-hearted maid, Fowler, has aroused Harrington's fears by claiming that the Jew would carry him away in his bag if he did not come to bed. A form of Hartleyan associative psychology is grafted onto a discourse of the nervous body, as outlined, for example by Thomas Trotter in *A View of the Nervous Temperament* (1807).<sup>45</sup> Once the associative links are understood and confronted, Harrington can be cured.

The associative logic is made quite plain—the fears are not caused by the mysterious play of light, or the emergence of a strange figure, but rather entirely by lower-class foolishness. The explanatory move is found throughout nineteenth-century texts: a lower-class member of the household is made responsible for the otherwise inexplicable disturbance of middle-class domestic order.<sup>46</sup> Thus Martineau denounces mothers who allow ignorant nurses to frighten children 'with goblin stories, or threats of the old black man . . . The instances are not few of idiotcy or death from terror so caused.'<sup>47</sup> Martineau's suggestion that death can be caused by nurses' tales takes to an extreme the distrust and scapegoating focused on the disruptive figure of the working-class nurse who held sway in the middle-class nursery.<sup>48</sup> Jane Eyre, of course, was terrified by Bessie's tales of the 'Gytrash', which remain with her in adulthood, but a far more virulent attack on the irresponsibility of nurses in the telling of tales comes, rather surprisingly, from that great defender of the fairy tale, Charles Dickens, in his 1860 piece 'Nurse's Stories'. Dickens finds that the people and places he knew in childhood were as nothing compared with those he had been introduced to by his nurse before he was 6 years old,

. . . and used to be forced to go back to at night without at all wanting to go. If we all knew our own minds (in a more enlarged sense than the popular acceptance of that phrase), I suspect we should find our nurses responsible for most of the dark corners we are forced to go back to, against our wills.<sup>49</sup>

The nurse is portrayed as enjoying a 'fiendish enjoyment of my terrors'; her account of the shipwright who sold his soul to the devil and became overrun with rats occasioned in the young Dickens sensations of rats cascading over his body, so that 'At intervals, ever since, I have been morbidly afraid of my own pocket, lest my exploring hand should find a specimen or two of those vermin in it'.<sup>50</sup> The account is clearly custom-made for Freudian analysis. Dickens, however, raises all those tantalizing images whereby the adult

mind is still raddled by childhood terrors, which take up physical residence in his own trousers, only to cut the analysis abruptly short by resorting to that customary object of blame: the nurse. Despite Dickens's own zest in telling the tale, the 'dark corners' of his mind are attributed to the lack of control, and indeed sadistic impulses, of his working-class carer. There is an arch playfulness about the essay, however, which suggests an ironic self-consciousness that in retelling the story, Dickens is himself re-enacting the role of the nurse.

The other Romantic text I wish to consider is Charles Lamb's 'Witches and other Night-Fears' of 1821, which offers a rather different structure of explanation for childhood distress. The account of his childhood terror is very similar to that of Jameson, only the text this time is Thomas Stackhouse's *History of the Bible* and the engraving is that of the Witch of Endor summoning the spirit of Samuel (Fig. 2.1). Lamb observes that he never laid down between the ages of 4 and 8 without seeing that spectre. Yet, he continues,

Be old Stackhouse then acquitted in part, if I say, that to his picture of the Witch raising up Samuel—(O that old man covered with a mantle!) I owe—not my midnight terrors, the hell of my infancy—but the shape and manner of their visitation. . . . It is not book, or picture, or the stories of foolish servants, which create these terrors in children. They can at most but give them a direction.<sup>51</sup>

In this scenario, books and servants are only indirect causes of childhood hell; blame is assigned instead to the inherited structures of the mind. Lamb reinforces his argument by drawing on the example of 'little T. H.' (Thornton Hunt, Leigh Hunt's eldest child), who had been brought up 'with the most scrupulous exclusion of every taint of superstition' and heard no tales of goblins, apparitions, or bad men and yet 'from his little midnight pillow, this nurse-child of optimism will start at shapes, unborrowed of tradition, in sweats to which the reveries of the cell-damned murderers are tranquillity'.<sup>52</sup> Like Edgeworth, Jameson, and Martineau, Lamb is disturbed by a child's capacity to experience such seemingly unwarranted terror. His puzzlement carries, however, a certain wilful blindness for, as Judith Plotz has noted, Thornton Hunt at the age of 3 was placed in prison with his father.<sup>53</sup> He suffered terrible nightmares until removed on a physician's orders. Lamb makes no reference to this undoubtedly searing personal experience, but turns instead for his preferred explanation to a notion of ancestral forms. Thus, gorgons and hydras, he



**Figure 2.1.** ‘Saul consulting a Witch at Endor’. Thomas Stackhouse, *A New History of the Holy Bible* (1733), in *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb* ed. by E. V. Lucas (1903–5). Courtesy of the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, shelf-mark: 270 e. 1214/2

argues, ‘may reproduce themselves in the brain of superstition—but they were there before. They are transcripts, types—the archetypes are in us, and eternal.’ The fact that these terrors predominate in the period of sinless infancy is thus explained, and we are afforded, he suggests, ‘a peep at least into the shadow-land of pre-existence’.<sup>54</sup> Where Wordsworth envisages a child trailing clouds of glory from its previous existence, Lamb seems to

conjure up a Dantesque *Inferno*. The effect is rapidly undercut, however, as the rest of the essay is spent comically lamenting how prosaic his own dreams have become.

Edgeworth and Lamb, writing at roughly the same time, offer two very different explanatory models for night terrors, but ones that continue to echo down the century. For Edgeworth, the source of night terrors is external to the child, and hence the problem can be solved by careful vetting of one's nurses. Although later nineteenth-century texts are less mechanistic in their analysis, and show terror evoked independently of nurses' foolish tales, there is yet a strong investment in both the Jameson and Martineau texts in the belief that fears can be controlled by rationality. Nurses are once again scapegoated. Behind many of these texts one can trace the bafflement of parents: why should their child wake up screaming every night? It is noteworthy that all the medical and literary texts I have looked at insist that it is sheer cruelty to a child to leave it either alone or without a light at night. The physician Robert Brudenell Carter argues in 1855, for example, that 'Terror at night, depending either upon simple dread of solitude or darkness, or upon distressing dreams, or upon the tricks and falsehoods of nurses and attendants, is a source of disease that should be guarded against most completely'.<sup>55</sup> Like West he advises that 'a young child, whether ailing or not, should never be left in the dark, and never alone, when it is possible to avoid doing so; while one who is naturally excitable, or easily terrified, should always, upon waking, find a familiar face at hand'.<sup>56</sup> Clearly these instructions are for middle-class parents with nurses at their disposal. What is interesting here is the assumption that it is not unusual for a child to be scared of the dark or solitude, and that it is the duty of parents to guard their children against these conditions. The very solution to the problem, however, was the much-maligned nurse, seen elsewhere as the actual begetter of the original terrors. Like Edgeworth and Martineau, Carter speaks of the untold evils created by threatening children with 'bugbears' which have 'destroyed the health or intellect of many'.<sup>57</sup>

Lamb's explanation eschews attributing blame to the nurse, suggesting instead that fears are latent in us all. In a form of almost Jungian argument, he argues there are archetypes which haunt our dreams. In the Romantic period, however, there was no system of causal explanation to carry forward such a model. Yet later in the century, Darwinism, rather surprisingly, was to offer a materialist framework which could accommodate such idealist notions. In his

'Biographical Sketch of an Infant' of 1877, Darwin pondered on the fear his son expressed at the Zoological Gardens on seeing the 'beasts in houses': 'we could in no manner account for this fear. May we not suspect that the vague but very real fears of children, which are quite independent of experience, are the inherited effects of real dangers and abject superstitions during ancient savage times.'<sup>58</sup> Contrary to the usual assumptions, evolutionary biology, with its vista of animalistic descent, was not always an alarming prospect for the Victorians. In this case, Darwin finds it deeply reassuring to be able to account for his son's disturbance in terms of patterns of inherited memories.

Writing in the mid-century, Martineau and Jameson sought explanations for child terror either in external sources, the nurse's tale, or inadequate forms of child-rearing. Post-Darwin, new forms of explanation became available, bringing with them a whole new disciplinary framework. From the 1880s onwards, the science of child study, based on loosely framed evolutionary assumptions, developed rapidly in both Europe and the USA. In Britain such studies were led by George Eliot and G. H. Lewes's friend James Sully, whose 1895 *Studies of Childhood* marks the institution in England of this area as a disciplinary field. Sully, and other theorists, developed the study of childhood fear, with Sully moving gradually to accept a model grounded in evolutionary theory. In *Illusions: A Psychological Study* (1881), he speculated as to whether a child might have 'a sort of reminiscence of prenatal, that is, ancestral experience', concluding that the idea was a 'fascinating one, worthy to be a new scientific support for the beautiful thought of Plato and Wordsworth', but that in 'our present state of knowledge' any such reasoning would probably appear 'too fanciful'.<sup>59</sup> In *Studies of Childhood* he returns to precisely this notion, exploring in depth the foundation of child fears, satisfied now that he was not dwelling too much in the domain of the fanciful. Whilst drawing on evolutionary explanations, he rejects Darwin's suggestion that children feel instinctive fear of animals, and also dismisses explanations based on servants' stories.<sup>60</sup> Instead he develops a theory of childhood imagination, celebrating their creativity (whilst nonetheless also paralleling their terrors to those of animals and 'savages').<sup>61</sup> His evolutionary vision of childhood is a far more benign one than the terror-struck model of the mid-century. Its positive tone finds echoes in the literature of the period, where one can trace a similar preoccupation with childhood dreams and patterns of evolutionary explanation. The horrors of Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), with its suggestion of bestial inheritance, are countered,

for example, by Sarah Grand's *The Beth Book* (1897), which celebrates Beth's 'further faculty' and her dreams which place her in touch with her ancestors: human evolution and inheritance here give rise not to nightmares but to the capacity for enhanced imaginative play.<sup>62</sup> Similarly, J. A. Symonds in his memoirs initially blames his night terrors on a nurse, 'a superstitious country woman', and unsuitable books, but in revisiting the topic turns to an evolutionary rewriting of Lamb: 'In the long slow evolution of my self, it appears that the state of dreadful sub-conscious energy was always superior to the state of active intelligent volition. In a sense different from Charles Lamb, I was a dream child, incapable of emerging into actuality, containing potential germs of personality which it required decades to develop.'<sup>63</sup>

Although Sully sought to throw off the legacy of earlier explanations and to create a more positive image of childhood itself, and of the power of inheritance, he nonetheless ends his chapter on childhood fear with a discussion of the brutality of those who have charge of children and delight in practising on their terrors. Such is the enormity of this behaviour he resorts for explanation to the 'old dogma' that the devil can enter men and women: 'For here we seem to have to do with a form of cruelty so exquisite, so contrary to the oldest of instincts, that it is dishonouring to the savage and lower animals to attempt to refer it to heredity.'<sup>64</sup> Where reversion to inherited instincts had been for Darwin a way of explaining away childhood terror, Sully here inverts the evolutionary form of explanation to suggest that the behaviour of child carers who construct tales to terrify children is a form of refined cruelty that only the most perverted forms of civilization can produce.

In his 1905 essay on 'Infantile Sexuality', Freud dismissed the idea that nurses' stories are the cause of childhood fear; rather fear of the dark is caused by fear of loss of the person they love.<sup>65</sup> However, the idea that nurses and fairy tales were responsible for childhood fear continued to remain current (and indeed has more recently been transmuted in debates on computer games and videos, etc., where the dreaded electronic companion fulfils the role of the corrupting nurse). In *Handicaps of Childhood*, published in 1917, Bruce Addington reinforced the traditional warnings about nurses' stories with a graphic image of psychological damage: 'Every ugly thing told to the child, every shock, every fright given him, will remain like minute splinters in the flesh to torture him all his life long.'<sup>66</sup> Like a parent baffled by the sufferings of his child, Addington seeks an explanation for the barbarism of the First World War, and finds it 'in the fact that the

offending nation is one among whom the myth, the legend and fairy tale have pre-eminently flourished'. The night terrors of the whole of Europe are to be blamed on nurses' tales.

For the Victorians, as indeed for our contemporaries, states of child terror were threateningly inexplicable, undercutting ideas of childhood as a state of happy innocence, or models of associationist psychology which suggested that children, with their limited levels of experience, would be incapable of entering into the states of terror that could afflict adults. Although Romantic explorations of dreams and nightmares produced various studies of child terror, it was not until the mid-nineteenth century, with that decisive clustering of literary and medical texts, that the concept of night terror, as a specific childhood affliction, became a key entry in the English medical lexicon. In the shift between the first and third editions of his text, West quickly adjusted his diagnosis from physiological (digestive processes) to psychological (incipient mental disorder) in keeping with the emerging forms of explanation in both literary and psychiatric discourse. As the preoccupation with nurses' stories suggests, this was a subject that crossed constantly between disciplines as writers and medics sought to penetrate these 'dark corners' of the child mind. Even when the medical diagnosis is firmly established, the legacy of the literary figures remains strong. Thus Maudsley, writing in 1895, seems to draw on Martineau's picture of adult ignorance of child suffering in his uncharacteristically sympathetic observation that 'It is difficult for grown-up persons, unless perchance helped by a hateful memory of their own terrors in childhood, to realise the terrible agonies of fright and anguish which seize some nervous children when they are alone in the dark.'<sup>67</sup> Guthrie, in his study of childhood nervous disorders, is far more explicit in acknowledging his literary indebtedness. His chapters on 'The Fears of Neurotic Children' and 'Disorders of Sleep' draw extensively on Lamb, Martineau, De Quincey, and Dickens, as well as his own experiences of 'a peculiarly horrible dream' to which he had been liable since childhood.<sup>68</sup> Guthrie not only links, by implication, his own sufferings to those of Dickens, but extends the category of night terrors so that it encompasses dream hallucinations, day terrors, and 'educational night terrors' suffered by children 'who dream of lessons during the process of "being brought on" by teachers of Dr Blimber's type' (the headmaster in *Dombey and Son*). Although Guthrie, like West, attributes these disorders to impressions acting upon a 'morbidly excitable brain', there is no hint of

judgement but rather a vehement sense of identification with the sufferings of the nervous child.

In so many of these attempts to find an explanation for the seemingly inexplicable, writers focused on the idea of an external cause, whether the corruption introduced into the middle-class nursery by the working-class nurse and her terrifying tales, or the evolutionary influence of inherited memories which located the source for child terror in the dim reaches of pre-history. Although utterly different in form, both modes of explanation operated to preserve the boundaries of childhood purity, separating the child from its own experiences. The force of the literary texts tended to cut across such reassuring distinctions, however, to suggest, whatever explanations were invoked, that terror was indeed intrinsic to the childhood state. De Quincey, writing a sequel to his *Confessions of an Opium Eater*, chose to return to childhood to explain the intensity and form of his adult dreams, in 'The Affliction of Childhood'. The phrase, with its Old Testament echoes, captures the powerlessness of childhood under suffering, whilst also suggesting that childhood itself is a form of disease, an affliction heightened by solitude, grief, and terror. Dickens, in the essay 'Chatham Dockyard' singled out by Guthrie, follows his reflections in 'Nurse's Stories' with a startling interjection on childhood dreams:

Sauntering among the ropemaking, I am spun into a state of blissful indolence, wherein my rope of life seems to be so untwisted by the process as that I can see back to very early days indeed, when my bad dreams—they were frightful, though my mature understanding has never made out why—were of an interminable sort of ropemaking, with long minute filaments for strands, which, when they were spun home together close to my eyes, occasioned screaming.<sup>69</sup>

The nurse is no longer scapegoated. Instead, Dickens returns to a sense of bafflement, and to an image that captures both the terror of a childhood dream, and the shape of a life, where filaments of these terrors are permanently interwoven into the coils of the adult self, springing forth in all their freshness if tension is relaxed. In these mid-century texts, the very inexplicable quality of childhood dreams underscores their centrality. The fascination with childhood terror is founded on a quest for origins. The key to the sufferings of the present is to be found in the enigma of the terrified child—enigmatic not in its qualities of innocence or joy but in the depths of its terror.



# 3

## Lies and Imagination

### *Against Lying*

Oh 'tis a lovely thing for youth  
To walk betimes in wisdom's way;  
To fear a lie, to speak the truth,  
That we may trust to all they say.  
But liars we can never trust,  
Though they should speak the thing that's true;  
And he that does one fault at first,  
And lies to hide it, makes it two.  
Have we not known, nor heard, nor read,  
How God abhors deceit and wrong?  
How Ananias was struck dead,  
Caught with a lie upon his tongue?  
So did his wife, Sapphira, die,  
When she came in, and grew so bold  
As to confirm that wicked lie  
That, just before, her husband told.  
The Lord delights in them that speak  
The words of truth; but ev'ry liar  
Must have his portion in the lake  
That burns with brimstone and with fire.  
Then let me always watch my lips,  
Lest I be struck to death and hell,  
Since God a book of reck'ning keeps  
For ev'ry lie that children tell.

Isaac Watts<sup>1</sup>

In its preoccupation with the passions and delusions of childhood, early psychiatry replicated the concerns of the moral and educational literature of the period, which focused on the naughty or passionate child and the dreaded figure of the liar. Crichton Browne's declaration that 'Monomania, or delusional insanity, we believe to be more common during infancy and childhood than at any other period of life' opened up the whole complex question of childhood truthfulness to medical scrutiny and diagnosis.<sup>2</sup> Fantasy, conflated with an inability to tell the truth, became a form of

pathology: one of the key symptoms of moral insanity in the child was lying. As the psychiatrist George Savage was to observe in an article on 'Moral Insanity', the morally insane child lies 'with such wonderful power that he lies like truth'. Moral insanity and 'the power of romancing as a genius' are 'scarcely to be distinguished'.<sup>3</sup> Crichton Browne similarly warns against 'castle building' which he denounces as a 'most pleasant but pernicious practice': 'much mental derangement in mature life, we believe, is attributable to these reveries indulged in during childhood'.<sup>4</sup> An even sterner warning had been issued earlier by Forbes Winslow in the *Journal of Psychological Medicine*:

There can be no virtue where there is no reality, and no religion where there is not virtue. And what is reality but truth? And what is unreality or pretence, but falsehood or double-mindedness? And what is mania, but a false or unreal condition, which may end in a permanently disorganized state of the once really healthy mind? . . . O, if men but knew the inestimable value of truth, and the ultimate horror, to say nothing of the bad policy of a lie, whether it be an acted or a spoken one!<sup>5</sup>

Medical, religious, and educational commentators combined to warn of the dangers of a lie, with the difference that medicine replaced the threat of hell with that of future insanity.

Watts's poem printed above was ubiquitous in the Victorian period, endlessly reprinted in texts for children and used as a ready source of admonition by parents. Significantly, although the original biblical story referred to adults, the primary moral target in the nineteenth century was the child. Girls were made to embroider on samplers the warning that every liar 'Must have his portion in the lake / That burns with brimstone and with fire', whilst the author of 'Wrongs of my Boyhood' recounts with great bitterness how, after being wrongly accused of lying, he was forced to learn Watts's hymn.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps the most famous literary representation of lying at this period occurs in *Jane Eyre*, where Jane is brought before that 'black pillar' of a man, Mr Brocklehurst, accused of deceit: "'Deceit is, indeed, a sad fault in a child,'" said Mr Brocklehurst; "it is akin to falsehood, and all liars will have their portion in the lake burning with fire and brimstone". On leaving he presents Jane with a text, the 'Child's Guide', advising her to 'read it with prayer, especially that part containing "an account of the awfully sudden death of Martha G—, a naughty child addicted to falsehood and deceit"'.<sup>7</sup> The allusion is to the children's

magazine the *Children's Friend*, published by Mr Brocklehurst's original, the evangelical clergyman Revd William Carus Wilson, which offered a continuous diet of such material.<sup>8</sup> Every issue had articles on the 'awful death' of a child, caught in the midst of sin, with many strictures against lying. The first volume, for example, contained an article on lying where the family of a girl found lying were brought together by the father, who showed them 'that this sin was as hateful to God now, as it was when he struck Ananias and Sapphira dead; and that it was of the Lord's mercy that we were not consumed'.<sup>9</sup>

Not content with merely handing out his tract, Mr Brocklehurst, on visiting Lowood School, makes Jane stand upon a stool, to be exhibited to all as that most shameful of human beings, 'a liar!'. The pupils are all instructed to shun her, whilst the teachers are exhorted to 'watch her: keep your eyes on her movements, weigh well her words, scrutinize her actions, punish her body to save her soul'.<sup>10</sup> Like keepers in an asylum, or physicians watching a patient for the first flickerings of latent insanity, they must be ever on their guard for the slightest signs of a departure from the strict bounds of truth, or sanity. Although extreme, Mr Brocklehurst's response to the 'contaminating' presence of a lie is not out of line with Victorian school practice.<sup>11</sup> Thus the novelist Elizabeth Sewell in her autobiography recalled how a child accused of lying at Miss Crook's school was forced 'to stand for hours in a long black gown wearing a piece of red cloth resembling a tongue with the word "Liar" spelled out in large red letters'.<sup>12</sup> It seems that the horror evoked by lying, of hiding or obscuring the truth, can only be assuaged by recourse to the most overt and explicit public rituals of humiliation.<sup>13</sup>

As John Kucich has argued, the centrality of truth-telling in Victorian culture occurred at a time when the pre-Romantic separation of the ethical and epistemological domains had collapsed, and knowledge had become an aspect of morality.<sup>14</sup> The issue takes on new dimensions, however, with reference to childhood, where the question of what constitutes 'truth' for a being who has not yet attained adult rationality becomes quite complex. At what point does misperception become a lie? And at what age might it be possible for a child to differentiate fully between the inner workings of its mind or imagination and the events within the external world? For many commentators, however, no such subtleties were admissible. Mothers, for example, were exhorted in household advice books to ensure, above all else, that their children never strayed from the path of truth. Thus in *How Do You*

*Manage the Young Ones?*, Old Chatty Cheerful, F.H.H.S. (Fellow of the Happy Home Society) advised mothers to 'Watch for a lie . . . as you would watch for some destructive viper'.<sup>15</sup>

It would appear that such household manuals were on the side of Gradgrinding truth, in opposition to the redemptive forces of fancy, so strongly advocated by Dickens in *Hard Times*. The division between the moralists and novelists is not so clear cut, however. Many literary and fictional writers also subscribed to stern moral condemnations of the child liar. Language similar to that of Old Chatty Cheerful is to be found even in the work of Anna Jameson or Harriet Martineau, who had both produced imaginative fiction. Thus Jameson in 'Pestilence of Falsehood' in her *Commonplace Book* (published in the same year as *Hard Times*, 1854) observes: 'I think, with Carlyle, that a lie should be trampled on and extinguished wherever found. I am for fumigating the atmosphere when I suspect that falsehood, like pestilence, breathes around me.'<sup>16</sup> With reference to her own childhood, she records that she knew 'very well, in a general way, that to tell a lie was *wicked*; to lie for my own profit or pleasure, or to the hurt of others, was, according to my infant code of morals, worse than wicked, it was—*dishonourable*'. She deeply regrets, however, that she had had 'no compunction about telling fictions;—inventing scenes and circumstances, which I related as real, and a keen sense of triumphant enjoyment in seeing the listener taken in by a most artful and ingenious concatenation of impossibilities'. She continued her delight in such recitation until the age of 12, when her conscience was awoken to 'the necessity of truth as a principle, as well as its holiness as a virtue'.<sup>17</sup> The passage highlights the confused relation between storytelling and lying, separated in her childhood mind, but firmly associated once she adopts an adult code of values. The issue is a peculiarly charged one for novelists and imaginative writers, who could be said to adopt precisely the delight in tale-telling here dismissed as a form of sin. Interestingly, Jameson in her recollections insists that she was perfectly aware that she was creating fictions, thus transforming in retrospect the imaginative life of a child into a form of artifice. As psychologists and writers were to suggest later in the century, however, it is far from clear that a child has such powers of discrimination between an inner imaginative life and external reality. Jameson's self-recriminations seem to focus on the fact that as a child she adopted, self-consciously, the adult pose of a professional novelist, without the institutional structures which legitimate such 'lies'.

Harriet Martineau appears to adopt a far more positive attitude to childhood imagination in *Household Education* (1849).<sup>18</sup> She laments the fact that education tends to stifle imagination and advocates strongly the development of the faculty of Wonder. She preaches, nonetheless, the stern duty of absolute truthfulness. Thus a poor child who, from inattention, has told a slight untruth is held before us as an example of moral turpitude: 'When a moral disease so fearful as this appears, parents should never rest till they have found the seat of it, and convinced the perilled child of the deadly nature of its malady.'<sup>19</sup> The girl, who had carelessly answered that she had not played shuttlecock that morning, had compounded her wrongdoing by adding the sins of pride and temper. Her mother's 'severe countenance roused her pride and obstinacy, and she wickedly repeated her denial. Here it was temper that was the snare.' The child is not sent off to read Watts's hymn but rather the original biblical account of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5: 1–10), a task which, Martineau regretfully observes, was counter-productive. Acts records how Ananias is charged by the apostles with selling all his possessions. He keeps back a portion for himself, however, and when rebuked by Peter for lying to God, falls down dead. His wife Sapphira, unaware of what has happened to her husband, repeats his lie to Peter, and also his 'awfully sudden death'. On reading this account the child, rather than recognizing the error of her ways, takes it as a form of self-vindication. Ananias's greatest sin, she decides, was not lying but the original theft, and thus his case has no relation to her own.

The vignette offers a fascinating glimpse into the mind of a rebellious child who challenges adult systems of interpretation. For Martineau, however, such a response merely confirms her belief that the child is suffering from a deadly 'moral disease'. In this essay Martineau, like Jameson, equates the telling of outright lies with the domain of fantasy. Whilst recognizing that children will often recite 'wonderful dreams', or 'wonderful things' they have seen in their walks, such as 'giants, castles, beautiful ladies riding in the forests', she classifies such accounts as lies and maintains that it is up to the parents to correct even the most trifling of misstatements, for 'All peace is broken up when once it appears there is a liar in the house'.<sup>20</sup> The mid-century preoccupation with the stern values of truth rests in uneasy association with her own appreciation of the value of child fantasy.

The language of disease, infection, and malady suggests how easy it was for lying, as a disease, to pass from the educational/religious lexicon to that

of medicine, where lying becomes both a form and symptom of disease. Fear of lying is also linked to fears of the possible sexuality of a child. For Savage, lying often led to that other form of concealed activity, masturbation.<sup>21</sup> The discrete warnings of vipers and serpents, or of the tongue, here take on other meanings. Thus Martineau warns of the dangers facing a talkative child: 'Oh! let his parents guard him well, by making him early the guardian of the "unruly little member" which may, by neglect, deprive him of the security and peace which should naturally spread through his innocent heart through his open and honest life!<sup>22</sup> Such anxious concerns with control of the tongue were replicated in the obsessive, almost hysterical, literature at the time on the control of that other 'unruly little member', the penis. 'What is the ravage of fields, the slaughter of flocks, or even the poison of serpents', Samuel Gridley Howe demanded, 'compared with the pollution of body and soul, that utter extinction of reason, and that degradation of beings made in God's image, to a condition which it would be an insult to the animals to call beastly, and which is so often the consequence of excessive indulgence in this vice?'<sup>23</sup> While it 'saps and weakens the higher qualities of the mind', it strengthens deceit, for 'Many a child who confides everything else to a loving parent, conceals this practice in his innermost heart'. Parents can journey from place to place trying to restore the health of their beloved child 'while the victim hugs the disgusting serpent closely to his bosom, and conceals it carefully in his vestment'.<sup>24</sup>

Just as reveries, 'castle building', or lies could be seen to lead to insanity, so masturbation, that 'sin of imagination',<sup>25</sup> could take the victim on the downward path to lies, deceit, insanity, and possible death. Medical commentators were divided as to whether masturbation would lead to deceit and thence insanity, or whether lying was the first step in a descent from truth which would then encompass masturbation as a sign of insanity.<sup>26</sup> By the end of the century, the female commentator Ennis Richmond felt able to make explicit the connections between lying and masturbation which remained unstated in the works of Jameson and Martineau. 'A child who had been trained to love truth in the sense that he has been trained to show himself to those he loves and to those who love him, cannot lie', she claims, and hence 'will not pervert natural instincts into impure thoughts, secret words, and acts.'<sup>27</sup> To depart from the realm of truth, whether in acts of the imagination or of masturbation, was to enter a 'secret' world, not amenable to adult control. The preoccupation with that hidden 'viper' of

lying or sexuality was central to the middle-class will to control, which repeatedly found itself baffled by the hidden, indecipherable inner world of the child.

In *The Power of Lies*, John Kucich explores the transgressive force of the lie in Victorian culture, but this was not a power, I would suggest, that novelists were willing to grant to children. In *Jane Eyre* we see truth being manipulated as the weapon of the powerful. Despite Jane's attacks on John Reed and various outbursts of passion, it is deceit, the worst crime possible for a child, of which she stands accused. She has masqueraded as a normal child, but has now revealed the dangerous passions which surge within her. Her defence, however, is not to challenge the dominance of this suspect category of 'truth', but rather to claim it for herself:

'I am not deceitful: if I were I should say I loved *you*; but I declare I do not love you: I dislike you the worst of anybody in the world except John Reed; and this book about the liar, you may give it to your girl, Georgiana, for it is she who tells lies, and not I.'

She dares to challenge Mrs Reed, and to upbraid her for her miserable cruelty, 'Because it is the *truth*. . . I will tell everybody who asks me questions, this exact tale. People think you a good woman, but you are bad; hard-hearted. *You* are deceitful.'<sup>28</sup> In Victorian fiction's most virulent and articulate attack by a child on the adult abuses of power, Jane merely reverses Mrs Reed's accusations: her aunt's worst sin has not been cruelty but deceit. Jane shows a touching faith in the idea that retelling 'this exact tale' will result in the reordering of the universe so that her own version of truth prevails.<sup>29</sup> Such faith is dashed by the reappearance of Mr Brocklehurst, but Brontë nonetheless permits it to be vindicated through the saintly Miss Temple. Although Jane, through her reading, is allowed to inhabit the alternate realms of imagination, her transgressive power comes from her ability to claim truth as the prerogative of the child.

In more conventional fiction of the period, lying often formed the moral crux of the narrative. Thus in *Amy Herbert* (1844), written under the influence of the Oxford Movement, Elizabeth Sewell emphasized the importance of early moral education: her young girls have to learn that what might appear 'trifling faults' in children are actually real sins. As Colonel Herbert observes: 'Children injure themselves for life by indulging in what are called trifling faults—a little vanity, or a little selfishness, or a hastiness of temper.'<sup>30</sup> The upright Amy is contrasted with her cousins, who

had grown up 'with all their natural evil inclinations unchecked and the good unimproved', and with their worldly friend, Lucy Cunningham.<sup>31</sup> All comes to a head when a child's life is put at risk by their carelessness and selfishness, but even at this point Lucy, the worst offender, is saved from the enormity of telling an outright lie. Although 'from nature and education entirely selfish', Miss Cunningham is unable to tell 'an actual falsehood' when interrogated by her brother: 'notwithstanding her propensity to equivocation and deceit, she could not make up her mind to do it'.<sup>32</sup> Such is the moral freight carried by the idea of lying, even a child who seems without redeeming qualities, and indirectly causes the death of the angelic child Rose, and the wrongful dismissal of a governess, is yet saved from the ultimate sin of the direct lie. At the other end of the spectrum, in Sarah Grand's 'new woman' novel of the 1890s, *The Heavenly Twins*, we are presented with the most mischievous and anarchic children of the century. Angelica and Diavolo cause mayhem wherever they go; they have 'no reverence for anything or anybody' and literally blow up their father with gunpowder, but are called 'The Heavenly Twins' because 'they always keep their word'. Truth is suborned, however, to serve their nefarious purposes. As their mother complains, 'When they *are* found out they always confess everything with a frankness which is quite provoking, because they so evidently enjoy the recital of their own misdeeds'.<sup>33</sup> As in *Jane Eyre*, the children retain their virtue, despite their misdeeds, by their adherence to the values of truth, but these have been redefined to constitute a vindication of childhood disruption.<sup>34</sup>

*The Heavenly Twins* is indicative of the transformations which have occurred in attitudes to childhood and lying over the latter half of the nineteenth century. In the literature and psychology (but not so much in the psychiatry) of the period, one can trace a gradual relaxation in attitudes to lying, as Victorian codes of behaviour weaken and more thought is given to what 'lying' might mean in a child, although even in early texts there can be unexpected flashes of sensitivity. Thus in the stern *Course of Lectures on the Physical, Intellectual, and Religious Education of Infant Children* (1836), Mrs Thomas Spurr had argued that we ought to repress crying 'as we would a *sin*, for it is the childish method of expressing discontent with the circumstances which surround it', yet she is more lenient with reference to a lie: 'The lie that we would reprove, must be evident to the child's mind as well as our own; it must be the result of a deliberate intention to deceive, *or it is no lie*'.<sup>35</sup> Such encouragement to discrimination is largely absent from



mid-century non-fictional treatments of the child lie, but in the last decades of the century, which witnessed the growth both of imaginative children's literature and of scientific studies of child development, discussions become more nuanced and less judgemental. Writing in 1876, the high church novelist Charlotte Yonge observed that there was scarcely a child of education 'who does not view falsehood as the worst crime within its range' (veracity, of course, was a virtue reserved for the middle classes). She then offers, however, a sympathetic account of the three causes of failures of veracity in children: timidity, insulted reserve, and romancing, the latter being the least serious, but of more danger of becoming a life-long defect.<sup>36</sup>

At the point where child 'romancing' became firmly entrenched in the medical lexicon as a symptom of moral insanity, it emerged, contrariwise, as a subject of sympathetic study in the fields of literature and developmental psychology. In his famous 1878 essay 'Child's Play', Robert Louis Stevenson bridges the two fields. It opens with a discussion of the limitations of childhood, the 'swaddling numbness of infancy' when young children are wheeled around 'in a pleasing stupor', without the intensity or definition of feeling acquired with age. It is not imagination they exhibit at this period but 'pedestrian fancy'. The overwhelming effect of the essay, however, is to celebrate the world of 'play' in which the child lives, establishing a complete break between the understanding of the adult and the world the child constructs: 'To think of such a frame of mind, is to become disquieted about the bringing up of children. Surely they dwell in a mythological epoch, and are not the contemporaries of their parents.' Stevenson takes the familiar anthropological trope, that children are at the developmental stage of savages, and gives it a defamiliarizing twist, so that children not only exhibit traits of an earlier stage of development, but do not inhabit the same frames of time or space as their parents. Bizarrely, they are 'not contemporaries'.<sup>37</sup>

Such a formulation necessarily transforms attitudes to lying. One should not expect, Stevenson argues, 'any peddling exactitude about matters of fact' from children for 'they are passionate after dreams and unconcerned about realities'. We take a child, he continues, 'who passes three-fourths of his time in a dream and the rest in open self-deception; and we expect him to be as nice upon a matter of fact as a scientific expert bearing evidence. Upon my heart, I think it is less than decent.' In place of the mid-century threats of brimstone and fire, or the warnings of Jameson and Martineau of the 'deadly malady' which might follow the slightest untruth, we have a

new construction of childhood which actively celebrates inexactitude as a symptom of the imaginative, self-enclosed world of the child. Although children might dwell in an earlier 'mythological' epoch, it is clear that they are nonetheless very domesticated savages, with none of the disturbing traits so often attributed to barbarians. They dwell, not in hostile jungles or desolate plains, but in that carefully controlled space which abuts the Victorian home, the garden. 'They will have to come out of their gardens soon enough, and have to go into offices and the witness-box', Stevenson observes. 'Spare them yet a while, O conscientious parent!'<sup>38</sup> The essay is redolent with the nostalgia for a golden age that critics have identified in the children's literature of this period.<sup>39</sup> It should also be seen, however, in the context of the emerging science of childhood in the late century, and particularly the work of Stevenson's close friend James Sully. Although overly Romantic in tone, the essay nonetheless became a central reference point in the science of child development which articulated new attitudes to childhood play, imagination, and constructions of 'truth'.

In *Studies of Childhood* (1895), Sully refuted the widely held belief that 'children are accomplished little liars, to the manner born, and equally adept with the mendacious savage'.<sup>40</sup> While seemingly happy to keep in place this construction of the 'savage', which the child is otherwise seen to resemble, Sully is at pains to rewrite such ideas of child mendacity, which he notes even leaders of the science of child study have reinforced. Thus the French theorist Bernard Perez had argued that we can notice 'from the cradle, at least in some children, the signs of an innate disposition to concealment, to dissimulation, to ruse'.<sup>41</sup> Perez's compatriot Gabriel Compayré had sought to overturn this construction, arguing that lying was in fact learnt behaviour, and reserved for the 'perverted little "gamins"' of the street: 'Nature usually spares children that are well-born, and in any case very little children.' As in Sully's distinction between the child and the savage, a firm moral hierarchy is here applied. Compayré was responding to the 'heart-breaking instances that forensic medicine furnishes us, when it shows us children before justice, accused or testifying, imagining with an extraordinary facility and holding with a heart-rending obstinacy all sorts of false stories, with details as false as they are exact'.<sup>42</sup> This is the child constructed by the discipline of child psychiatry, as represented in England by Crichton Browne, George Savage, or Henry Maudsley, which offered consistently more negative models of childhood than those pertaining in the parallel field of child psychology. Compayré acknowledges the

problem, whilst distancing himself from it, by assigning such liars to the lower classes. Sully takes a similar line, arguing that a child who is well brought up will not only acquire a respect for truth but exhibit 'moral shock' at the very idea of 'perpetrating a knowing untruth'.<sup>43</sup>

Whilst protecting the middle-class child from the moral dangers of outright lying, Sully does, however, create an exceedingly elastic construction of truthfulness. Thus he explores the ways in which ruses and dissimulation are not 'full-fledged lies' since, in the evolutionary perspective, they belong to a child's 'early developed instinct to secrete things' and their 'hiding propensity'.<sup>44</sup> Other forms of apparent untruth come from the power of 'vivid fancy', imitation, the power of suggestion, illusions of memory, and the contagiousness of lying.<sup>45</sup> He also offers a new category of 'amiable mendacity', from a desire to please, which would have been anathema to his mid-century predecessors.<sup>46</sup> Sully opens up the possibility of a whole range of behaviour which would earlier have been classed as lying, but is now seen as outside the category of downright falsehood, and thus permissible to the morally upstanding child. Furthermore, he suggests that 'a large part of childish untruth comes upon the scene in connexion with moral authority and discipline'.<sup>47</sup> Whilst Stevenson merely called upon parents to be more understanding of the dream world of childhood, Sully suggests that the very flaws that so vexed parents and religious representatives were themselves creations of ill-advised systems of governance. Thus interrogations can themselves produce lies, while of all childish offences, 'lying is the one which is apt to be specially branded by theological sanctions'. Noting the extreme terror induced in children by fear of telling a lie, he asks: 'Do children contract a horror of a lie when no religious terrors are introduced?'<sup>48</sup> The question is lightly posed, and not answered by Sully, but reverberates through the text as a challenge to all those negative constructions of childhood produced by the evangelical movement.

Sully's relaxed approach to lying parallels that of the French philosopher G. M. Guyau, who followed a similar trajectory in *Education and Heredity* (1891), placing child lying in the context of evolutionary development. Even more emphatically than Sully, Guyau celebrates the interlinked possibilities of imagination and lying: 'The lie is in most cases the first exercise of the imagination, the first invention, the germ of art.' Such creative forms are to be distinguished, however, from the 'moral lie' or 'dissimulation', which 'only arises from fear; it is in direct ratio to the ill-judged severity of parents, and to unscientific education'.<sup>49</sup> The child is directly rescued from

the moral opprobrium of the 'real lie', and all guilt placed firmly at the door of corrupting adults.

In constructing his theories, Sully also drew on the work of G. Stanley Hall, leader of the Child Study Movement in America, who, as part of the new 'scientific' approach to childhood, studied the lies of '300 normal children'.<sup>50</sup> His categories are those employed by Sully, but his orientation is less positive. He recognizes the link with imagination, arguing that 'its control and not its elimination in a Gradgrind age of crass facts is what should be sought in the interests of higher truthfulness', but follows this concession to imagination with the now infamous account of Hartley Coleridge living in the 'pseudo-hallucinations' of his imaginative constructions for years.<sup>51</sup> Harsh, diagnostic language cuts across any sympathetic treatment of the imaginative lie, as he explores the links with savages' highly subjective notions of truth and draws on recent studies in criminology to highlight the ways in which small lies feed into emerging criminal patterns of behaviour. 'Crime,' he notes, 'is cryptogamous and flourishes in concealment, so that falsehood not only facilitates but certain types of lies often cause and are caused by it.'<sup>52</sup> The dominant image is not of the innocent child corrupted by adult mismanagement, but rather that of the criminal mind, or that object of so much fascination to late-century psychiatry, the hysterical girl. Positive distaste is registered in his account of 'pseudomania, seen especially in pathological girls in their teens, who are honeycombed with selfishness and affectation and have a passion for always acting a part, attracting attention, etc'.<sup>53</sup> Honey, so often erotically associated with young women, is here transposed through 'honeyed lies' to become the essence of deceitful womanhood. The teenage girl, 'honeycombed' with lies and deceit, is the very opposite of his moral ideal: 'robust truth-speaking, which scorns pretense . . . which finds none of the titillation that neurotic constitutions derive from mendacity'.<sup>54</sup> As in the worries about masturbation, lying is once more connected to sexuality.

Even where children are clearly suffering from aggressive moral or religious education, Hall's tone is still judgemental. Many adolescents, he observes, 'become craven literalists and distinctly morbid and pseudophobic, regarding every deviation from scrupulously literal truth as alike heinous'. They develop systems of 'casuistic word-splitting' or of 'silently interpolating the words "not," "perhaps," or "I think," sometimes said over hundreds of times to neutralize the guilt of intended or unintended falsehoods'.<sup>55</sup> Hall spends little time speculating on the social causes of such

terror of the lie, however, which here spills over into terror of language itself, which holds so many traps for the unwary. He is more interested in delineating, and inventing terms to classify, the varieties of child morbidity.

Interestingly, an example of one such 'craven literalist' is offered in an autobiographical account of childhood in the late Victorian period, in the writer Eleanor Farjeon's *A Nursery in the Nineties*. Although Eleanor and her siblings were brought up very permissively by their novelist father Benjamin Farjeon, her older brother Harry became so terrified of lying that, until the age of 11, he added a 'perhaps' to everything he said.<sup>56</sup> In one sense, Harry could be seen as an answer to Sully's question: he has been raised in a literary, semi-bohemian household without exposure to religious dogma, but is nonetheless terrified of lying, even inadvertently. Whilst Sully was undoubtedly correct to surmise that religion had played a major role in creating childhood anxiety with reference to lying, horror of the lie, as this example suggests, was not merely restricted to severe religious texts, but was interwoven throughout the culture of the period, infiltrating even the most liberal of households.

With the emergence of child psychiatry in the mid-century, the social and religious horror of the lie was transposed into medical terms to become a symptom of pathology. 'Romancing' under this regime became an indicator of moral insanity, and childhood itself, as a state outside adult rationality, edged closer to the domain of insanity. To twenty-first-century eyes, looking from the perspective created by over a hundred years of child psychology, it is almost baffling that the Victorians could have applied the same criteria of truth-speaking to the child as to the adult, when children were still developing linguistic fluency, negotiating their position within language, and testing the borders between inner movements of the mind and the external world. The preoccupation with truth, which took on an even greater moral charge within the early Victorian period, became peculiarly focused, however, on the child who seemed so prone to stray outside its narrow limits. Nor was it only the Carus Wilsons, or Mr Brocklehursts, who policed these boundaries; concerned mothers also strove valiantly to correct their offspring, lest childish mistakes lay the foundations for confirmed habits and a lifetime of error.

The poetry of the Romantics had celebrated the imagination of the child, and the novel, from the 1840s, increasingly explored the imaginative dimensions of the child mind. Such developments ran side by side, however, with deep confusion in relation to the interface between fantasy and

lies. The texts of Jameson and Martineau exemplify this confusion, with praise for a child's faculty of wonder, conjoined with harsh condemnation of all forms of tale-telling. The language here is that of the detested viper or serpent, which was linked to that other dreaded form of childhood sin, sexuality. This is not to suggest that lying was to be feared primarily because it was a symptom of sexuality. Rather, that lying and sexuality were linked together as forms of alternate, hidden childhood experience, not amenable to adult control, and disruptive of the ideals of childhood innocence which so many wished to maintain. Such ideals were undoubtedly self-serving for the adults concerned, appealing to nostalgic projections of a lost world; they could, nonetheless, be conjoined with deep concern for the child, and a protective desire to stave off the encroachment of adulthood. There was uncertainty, however, as to what forms this innocence should take, and confusion as to how to respond to a child who failed to comprehend adult boundaries between truth and fiction.

In the last three decades of the century one can trace more permissive attitudes emerging, with the development of an extended genre of imaginative literature for children and a child study movement rooted in evolutionary psychology. The science of child study offered new ways of thinking about child development; the standard of measurement was no longer that of the Victorian adult mind but rather earlier stages of human evolution. A new frame of reference and model of temporality were brought into play, as summarized in Stevenson's seemingly whimsical claim that the child is not the 'contemporary' of its parents. Bourgeois models of rectitude and truth-speaking are supplanted by celebrations of the primitive mind. Patterns of behaviour earlier stigmatized as lying are now recuperated as instinctive responses. Sully, Compayré, and Guyau all stress the links between lying and childhood imagination, although it is noticeable that the middle-class child is still preserved from the sin of the outright lie. The concept of lying itself is redefined to accommodate new models of the imaginative child.

Threats of the lake of brimstone and fire were undoubtedly less prevalent by the end of the century (although new editions of Watts's hymns were still published in the 1890s). The new models of the child as a refreshing example of the primitive mind had their shadow, however, in the parallel stream of evolutionary psychiatry which stressed a far darker projection, modelled less on the 'primitive' than the 'savage' mind. In the latter the emphasis lies less on the creative relations between imagination and lying and more on the criminal, mendacious tendencies of savages. Where

evolutionary psychology, in the hands of Sully, offered a New Testament reading of childhood innocence, evolutionary psychiatry, drawing on similar forms of evidence, created a new scientific grounding for Old Testament models of the child as a creature of sin. The division between the two movements was not, of course, as clean cut as this might suggest. G. Stanley Hall leaned more towards the harsher perspective articulated by Maudsley and others, in which children were aligned with women, savages, and criminals in their propensity for falsehood.

Overall the second half of the nineteenth century witnessed the growth of a more permissive attitude towards the figure of the child, and the boundaries between lying and imagination. Science followed literature in attempting to understand the stages of child growth, although it is notable that the child was always to be measured against something other—whether the adult mind or those more tenuous concepts drawn from the anthropology of the period, the primitive or the savage mind. The idea of lying, and its relationship to imagination, was crucial to these developments as the Victorians sought to open up the child mind to adult comprehension. The following section will explore a related domain: the imaginary lands of childhood.

# 4

## Imaginary Lands

*To H. C., Six Years Old*

O Thou! Whose fancies from afar are brought;  
Who of thy words dost make a mock apparel,  
And fittest to unutterable thought  
The breeze-like motion and the self-born carol;  
Thou Faery Voyager! That dost float  
In such clear water, that thy Boat  
May rather seem  
To brood on air than on an earthly stream;  
Suspended in a stream as clear as sky,  
Where earth and heaven do make one imagery;  
O blessed Vision! Happy Child!  
Thou art so exquisitely wild,  
I think of thee with many fears  
For what may be thy lot in future years.

Wordsworth<sup>1</sup>

'the curb of imagination must be applied *early*, ere it has drunk in its excess of sunlight'<sup>2</sup>

The debates surrounding the childhood lie and its relations to insanity were inextricably bound up with discussions of imagination, where the shift between mid- and late-century attitudes is even more marked. By the mid-century, Romantic celebrations of the imaginative life of the child were under severe threat. The tone of censoriousness was set by Derwent Coleridge in his 1851 memoir of his brother Hartley, in which the beloved infant of the Romantic movement, the 'Faery Voyager' of Wordsworth's troubled poem, 'To H. C., Six Years Old', is offered up as an object lesson on the dangers of the imagination.<sup>3</sup> Where Sully, writing in the 1890s, would celebrate the creativity and imaginative labour invested by children in the construction of alternate worlds, Derwent writes with some distaste



for his brother's 'visionary habits'. The infinite care with which Hartley created his imaginary kingdom, Jugforcia, or Ejuxria, is seen as a symptom of pathology. This judgement was reinforced by Crichton Browne, who, drawing on the memoir, established Hartley Coleridge as a definitive case study for nineteenth-century psychiatry, demonstrating the alarming consequences of indulging in unbridled imaginative life during childhood.<sup>4</sup>

What was remarkable about Hartley's invention, however, was not its fanciful nature but rather its extreme mundanity. There are no flying horses but rather an intricate replication of institutional culture and politics. Hartley invented not just one nation but many, 'continental and insular, each with its separate history, civil, ecclesiastical, and literary, its forms of religion and government, and specific national character'.<sup>5</sup> Such labour was paralleled in the material world as Hartley also sought to create in a plot of land the physical infrastructure of his kingdom, with a canal, a 'tower and armoury, a theatre and "chemistry house"'. These details Derwent consigns to a footnote, of interest only, he notes with some disdain, to the 'determined child-fancier', although he does admit in the note that 'this whimsical narrative is not without psychological interest, even in an educational point of view'.<sup>6</sup> Derwent is simultaneously dismissive and fascinated, enacting once more his own role in childhood when, in the latter years, he was sole recipient of Hartley's imaginative confidences, the semi-reluctant auditor whose presence was necessary in order to confirm for Hartley (his senior by four years) the actuality of Ejuxria. Some element of sibling power-politics is clearly in play here. While Hartley, a small child (not reaching five feet when an adult), was subject to much bullying at school (paying the 'usual penalty', Derwent remarks, for 'helpless oddity'), he clearly derived power from his imaginary world. The boys who plagued him by day were held transfixed, 'night after night', by his tales as, like David Copperfield at Salem House school, 'he enchained the attention of his auditors'.<sup>7</sup>

Derwent's memoir and edition of Hartley's poems carries as a frontispiece a picture of Hartley aged 10 (Fig. 4.1).<sup>8</sup> He is captured for ever as the child who never grew up, a Victorian verdict on the excesses of Romanticism.<sup>9</sup> Qualities that are acceptable and indeed attractive in a child become distasteful in an adult. Wordsworth's desire that H. C. should either slip out of life like a dewdrop, or live on, preserving 'a lamb's young heart among the full grown flocks',<sup>10</sup> is given material form in this editorial decision to preface the work of the adult poet with a picture of him as a



Figure 4.1. 'Hartley Coleridge aged 10'. Frontispiece to *Poems by Hartley Coleridge* (1851). Courtesy of the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, shelfmark: 280 m. 228 (vol. 1)

child. Where one might expect a celebration of his poetry, we are offered a work that focuses on his failures, which are traced back to his childhood and to his creation of a world which presented ‘a complete analogon to the world of fact’.<sup>11</sup> As a child, Derwent observed, Hartley would ‘pour out his strange speculations, and weave his wild inventions, believing in his own tale; for indeed he had hardly become conscious of a difference between fact and fiction’.<sup>12</sup> Derwent offers a verdict of ‘moral infirmity’ with reference to his brother, one that is quickly picked up, as I argued earlier, by the *Edinburgh Review* and later given medical authority by Crichton Browne, who uses the case of Hartley to argue that children are more liable to ‘delusional insanity’ than adults.<sup>13</sup>

Hartley is offered as an extreme example of the tendency of many children to live in an alternate realm of ‘delusion’. Crichton Browne also cites Anna Jameson’s own analysis of her earlier dual life: ‘I can truly say that from ten years old to fourteen or fifteen I lived a double existence; one, outward, linking me with the external sensible world; the other, inward, creating a world to and for itself, conscious to itself only.’<sup>14</sup> Jameson offers her own verdict (not quoted by Crichton Browne): ‘My reveries were my real life: it was an unhealthy state of things.’ Her prescription, employment, has all the moral force of high Victorianism: ‘employment which shall bring with it the bond of a higher duty than that which centres in self’.<sup>15</sup> We could be listening to Dr Kenn counselling Maggie Tulliver, another girl who had spent her childhood in what Eliot terms ‘the triple world of Reality, Books and Waking Dreams’.<sup>16</sup> In her meditations on the role of ‘waking dreams’ in childhood development, however, Eliot—contrary to Crichton Browne—sees them as contributing imaginative strength and depth to her heroine’s character.

For modern readers, Hartley Coleridge’s obsessive creation of an alternate land, complete with legal, political, and cultural infrastructure, necessarily calls to mind that far better-known example of the Brontës’ construction of the worlds of Angria and Gondal. Their existence, in 1851, was unknown to the reading public, but in 1857 Elizabeth Gaskell, who had access to the juvenilia manuscripts held at the parsonage, tentatively introduced the subject to her readers in her biography of Charlotte. The section is brief, and focuses initially on the realism of Charlotte’s writing before acknowledging that there is also ‘wild weird writing’ where ‘her fancy and her language alike run riot, sometimes to the very borders of apparent delirium’.<sup>17</sup> Her explanation, however, which was to

add to the Brontë myth she was so sedulously creating, was that ‘children leading a secluded life are often thoughtful and dreamy’; the ‘unusual sights of earth and sky’ make deeper impressions on them, sometimes magnified into supernatural significance. In this ‘peculiarity’, however, they join a distinguished lineage—Chaldean shepherds or solitary monks—all figures ‘whose impressions from without have had time to grow and vivify in the imagination, till they have been received as actual personifications, or supernatural visions, to doubt which would be blasphemy’. Charlotte’s imaginative world is placed under the protective cloak of classical heritage and religion, defying readers to commit the blasphemy of critical response. Gaskell is quick, however, to rescue Charlotte from the very image of solitary dreamer she herself has just constructed. Her ‘strong common sense’ and practical duties within the home, such as sweeping, cooking, and mending, preserve her from Hartley’s fate: ‘Thus we see that, while her imagination received powerful impressions, her excellent understanding had full power to rectify them before her fancies became realities’.<sup>18</sup> As in the famous case of Nicolai of Berlin, insanity can be kept at bay if delusions are controlled by will and common sense. Daily dusting provides invaluable protection against the lures of the imagination.

It is an interesting question why, at this period, children in such different households should have invested such energy in creating alternate lands. While children with literary ambitions have often tried their hands at imitating adult forms of writing, there are not, as far as I am aware, any earlier records of them attempting to create entire imaginary lands, complete with political, economic, and cultural systems.<sup>19</sup> Certainly the publication of so many reflections on early childhood at the mid-century, including the posthumous publication in 1850 of Wordsworth’s *The Prelude*, seems to have had a contagious effect, stimulating further revelations from writers turning to their own childhoods as a source of self-understanding.<sup>20</sup> De Quincey had published his first reflections on childhood suffering and dreams in ‘*Suspiria de Profundis*’ (1845 and 1851) before returning in greater depth to his childhood experiences in *Autobiographic Sketches* (1851, and 1853–4).<sup>21</sup> In this latter work, which refers directly to Hartley Coleridge’s imaginary lands, he reveals that he also created imaginary kingdoms in childhood. Whilst for Charlotte Brontë we now have, thanks to the labours of Christine Alexander, a full textual recreation of the world of Angria, for De Quincey we have no texts but rather his own reflections upon and analysis of the imaginative world he created with his brother.<sup>22</sup> Where one

might suppose that an imaginative land would bring a sense of empowerment to a child locked within the strict regimen of an adult world, De Quincey reveals that it only increased his experience of the 'world of strife' due to the overwhelming dominance of his brother.

According to De Quincey's narrative, his older brother erupts, virtually unknown, into his life when he was 6. Prior to this his brother, who was about five years older, had been found 'wholly unmanageable' and had been sent away to school. From De Quincey's account, his brother would appear to be a candidate for the category of wayward, unbalanced upper-class youth depicted by Conolly. His 'genius for mischief amounted to inspiration' and De Quincey recounts how he attempted to walk on the ceiling, and to invent an apparatus so that he could spin like a humming top on his own axis for five months and defy the force of gravitation.<sup>23</sup> He also wrote numerous 'books', on subjects from pyrotechnics to necromancy, including 'How to raise a Ghost; and when you have got him down, how to keep him down'.<sup>24</sup> His attitude to his younger brother was one of unutterable contempt, but far from resenting this, De Quincey records, he revelled in it: 'I had a perfect craze for being despised. I doted on it, and considered contempt a sort of luxury that I was in continual fear of losing.'<sup>25</sup> Self-abasement becomes an effective ploy, opening to his brother no surface for attack (although De Quincey is perfectly happy to admit to his brother that he is an idiot, he does contest his brother's accusations of effeminacy, a charge which still clearly rankled). The 'world of strife' his brother creates is as far removed as possible from the image, created in later-century fiction for children, of siblings harmoniously entering an enchanted land. De Quincey's brother was 'as full of quarrel as it is possible to imagine', and dragged De Quincey into daily fights, both within the material world, against factory boys, and in the imaginative world of their personal creation:

I lived for ever under the terror of two separate wars in two separate worlds: one against the factory boys, in a real world of flesh and blood, of stones and brickbats, of flight and pursuit, that were anything but figurative: the other in a world purely aerial, where all the combats and the sufferings were absolute moonshine.

His sufferings from the former, however, were as nothing compared to those from 'that dream kingdom which rose like vapour from my own brain'.<sup>26</sup> Their jointly imagined kingdom merely intensifies his persecution, providing a more threatening arena in which his brother can exercise his will to power.

In *The Mill on the Floss*, Tom, that representative of the narrow, petty world of St Ogg's, chooses to put an end to Maggie's imaginative stories about insects by 'smashing the earwig at once as a superfluous yet easy means of proving the entire unreality of such a story'.<sup>27</sup> His uncalled-for violence is portrayed as an expression of the harsh literalism of masculine culture, set against the empathic, creative qualities of Maggie's femininity, where imagination, far from distorting understanding, actively heightens social sensitivity and responsiveness. By contrast, De Quincey shows both boys inhabiting an imaginary world, but its unreal setting only magnifies the gendered power relations of their daily lives: the older brother repeatedly ridicules De Quincey for his femininity. Far from a cosy retreat, this world of the imagination strips down to utter nakedness the power struggles of the two siblings. In a humorous digression, De Quincey imagines the chaos which must have reigned in Hartley Coleridge's kingdoms, as his subjects fell into a state of anarchy for want of requisite royal signatures.<sup>28</sup> Their own governments, he records, 'were less remissly administered', as each spurred the other on. Offering a fascinating insight into the child's perception of the relations between the real and unreal, De Quincey notes how he had initially believed he would be safe from his brother's domination if he located his kingdom, Gombroon, in a latitude as far as possible removed from his brother's kingdom of Tigrosylvania, thus placing 'a monstrous world of waters between us'. He discovers, to his astonishment, that such imagined physical barriers are of no use, for his brother's kingdom, he is informed, stretches across the globe: 'vast horns and promontories ran down from all parts of his dominions towards any country whatsoever . . . that he might have reasons for assaulting'.<sup>29</sup> Within this geographical projection of the psyche, his brother becomes the horned devil incarnate and the ultimate condensed expression of imperial aggression. Whatever he devises for his lands, De Quincey is pursued down the avenues of political economy, upbraided for not levying taxes or for relying on a largely fishing-based economy when his lands, he is informed, harbour diamonds which his people are not fit to mine. Although Gombroon is De Quincey's creation, he is powerless to control its destiny, for power, he learns, resides with those who claim ultimate definitional authority.

De Quincey's greatest sufferings occur when his brother comes across Lord Monboddo's theory that humans were descended from apes, and so must originally have had tails. He quickly publishes 'an extract from some scoundrel's travels in Gombroon' claiming that the Gombroonians had not

yet emerged from this state, and still had tails.<sup>30</sup> De Quincey captures the comic absurdity of the exchange whilst nonetheless highlighting the torture it occasioned him, and the utter debasement he felt, both for himself and his people. He undergoes, in a deeply private and explicitly personal sense, a concentrated form of the spiritual devastation and corresponding anger many people subsequently experienced in response to the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species*. For De Quincey, the defining experience was one of complete humiliation and powerlessness; even the option of abdicating is foreclosed for he has suffered too much with his people, and identified too strongly with them to abandon them now. His brother advises that he dress his people 'in the Roman toga, as the best means of concealing their ignominious appendages; if he meant this as comfort, it was none to me; the disgrace lay in the fact, not in its publication'.<sup>31</sup>

Again there is curious interplay between the concepts of the real and imaginary: although this world is of the imagination, it obeys rigid rules of physicality and social intercourse. His brother's suggested physical subterfuge, or concealment, cannot overturn the irrefutable 'fact' of degradation which owes its basis, however, to an extract from a 'scoundrel's' travel writing. For De Quincey, composing in adulthood for a public audience, the term 'publication' is highly charged. Writing, even of a scoundrel, can induce a humiliating form of self-knowledge, which, while it may elude further 'publication' for the external observer, nonetheless becomes part of the internalized self. There is, in De Quincey's text, none of the amused condescension to his childhood self which figures so largely in childhood reminiscences, and in some of the writings of the late-century childhood studies movement. He writes as an adult, but with full expectation that his audience will appreciate the extent of his suffering on behalf of his maligned people, and the complexity of thought of which a child is capable. To make strife overwhelming, he argues, 'it must not deal with gross material interests, but with such as rise into the world of dreams, and act upon the nerves through spiritual, and not through fleshly torments'. It was precisely the imaginative quality of his world which made his brother's slander such an exquisite form of torture.<sup>32</sup>

De Quincey concludes his account of 'this deep degradation of myself and my people' by turning to contemplate 'a different mode of degradation' affecting twin sisters, daughters of his tutor, 'remarkably plain in person and features, unhealthy, and obscurely reputed to be idiots'. From his own imaginary status as pariah, he passes to a literal case which reveals 'the

dreadful truth of what is going on for ever under the thick curtains of domestic life'. Like the Cagots, the outcast people of northern Spain who later figured in Elizabeth Gaskell's story 'An Accursed Race', these girls are outcasts in their own family, forced to work as servants by a mother who hates them, and driven to an early death by her persecution.<sup>33</sup> To De Quincey, however, they were loving and affectionate girls who were probably simply deaf rather than idiots. From his sufferings as a tailed creature in the realm of Gombroon he passes to the everyday dramas of persecution enacted even in 'respectable' households, where a child could become as one of Swift's *Struldbruggs*, young in years but 'old in misery', for 'intensity of a suffering existence may compensate the want of extension'.<sup>34</sup> The narrative juxtaposition is symbolic, but it turns on the new medical and cultural interest in idiocy emerging in the 1850s which, like the realms of fear and imagination, became an explicit area for psychological analysis.

By the 1890s, De Quincey's emphasis on the potential pain of imaginative creation in childhood looks distinctly outmoded. Writers of fiction for children had opened up imaginary lands for their characters to enter, whilst child psychologists like Sully were urging mothers not to lose 'one drop of the fresh exhilarating draught which daily pours forth from the fount of a child's phantasy'.<sup>35</sup> The early years, Sully proclaimed, were the 'age of imagination' with children, like savages, inhabiting a mythological realm. Their fascination for story, he suggests, stems from the fact that for them 'words are not dead thought-symbols, but truly alive and perhaps "winged" as the old Greeks called them'.<sup>36</sup> Amidst the general celebration of fantasy, however, there was less agreement as to how to treat the extended creation of alternate worlds. Thus Stanley Hall, in 'Children's Lies', suggests that 'we might almost say of children . . . that all their life is imagination'. Imaginative play, however, necessarily brings self-deception, and he offers Hartley Coleridge as an example of 'this normal tendency, but in a degree of intensity probably morbid most resembling the pseudo-hallucinations of Kandinsky'.<sup>37</sup> Although Hall is eager to condemn the *Gradgrinds* of modern education, he cannot prevent a sense of distaste for the interlocked world of lies and imagination, employing the language of disease to describe departures from truthfulness and arguing that we must 'strive to realize the sense in which all sin and all disease are lies, because perversions of the intent of Nature'. Childish fantasy hence becomes the foundation of the greatest sin of modern society, misplaced ambition, or the attempt to 'act a part or fill a place in life for which Nature has not made us'. This ambition 'is one of the



chief sources of waste of moral energy in modern society'. While Sully gives a Romanticized account of the world of the childish imagination which allows no space for the possible conflict it may entail, Hall pays lip service to the positive qualities of imagination whilst simultaneously placing childhood fantasy and lies at the heart of modern society's problems.

The final example I wish to explore of imaginary kingdoms, Eleanor Farjeon's *A Nursery in the Nineties* (1935), lies outside this book's time frame but offers an interesting backwards reflection by a successful children's writer on the experience of childhood in a cultured, semi-bohemian family at the time of the first flourishing of the childhood movements in the 1890s. Farjeon portrays a child-centred family, with a loving, caring mother and a novelist father deeply involved in the imaginative and emotional development of his children. Yet, as she remarks at one point, 'I cannot remember being without a headache; I cannot remember one night of restful sleep'. They were brought up by their Jewish father without religion; 'we were never obliged to believe in anything', yet, 'All the same, I was afraid of Hell and the Devil. Nurses saw to that.'<sup>38</sup> As I suggested earlier, her experience offers a partial answer to Sully's query as to whether children brought up without religion would still experience the same forms of fear: in a culture still saturated with religious beliefs and forms, such experimental conditions are almost impossible to achieve. Farjeon clearly suffered from disturbed sleep, if not full night terrors, but suggests she was able to overcome the effects by her 'Awake-at-Night Game', enabling her to 'change, almost at will, flat thought into three-dimensional fancy' (p. 261).

This game began around the age of 5, at the same time as she evolved with her older brother, Harry, their day game, TAR. Although presented with great affection, this brother seems to have resembled, in many respects, De Quincey's brother. He exercised absolute rule over all the children in the nursery, to the extent that when Farjeon reached the age of 16 and challenged his order to go to bed with the other children at the usual 'nursery' time of 9.30, he refused to acknowledge her existence for two weeks (p. 438). The power dynamics of their sibling relationship are here intensified by the threat of Farjeon's emergence into adult, potentially sexual, life. Their game of TAR had started at the age of 5, and 'for more than twenty years', Farjeon comments, 'it continued to be the chief experience of my inward and outward life' (p. 321). There are strong parallels with the Brontës here. As with Branwell and Charlotte, the older brother and sister bond together within a powerful imaginative world, which first

includes then marginalizes the younger ones, who turn to creating their own games. It also continues well into adulthood, far beyond the normal time frame of childhood fantasies.

Farjeon tries to keep her mode of presentation 'light', highlighting the pleasures rather than the pains of childhood. Writing in the wake of the celebratory attitude towards childhood imagination adopted in the late nineteenth century, she tries to stress the positive qualities of their secret world (nicknamed TAR, after their first imaginative roles, Tessa and Ralph, so that even its name would remain secret from others). She notes that 'It is common for two or more children to unite in imaginary games, played with intensity; and still more common is that solitary existence the child does not speak of, where he exchanges his personality for another. But I know of no case in which the game of two was continued for more than twenty years with increasing richness' (pp. 324–5). The game, she suggests, laid the foundations of her writing career: 'I owe to TAR, more than to any other element in my life, the flow of ease which makes writing a delight' (p. 322). The case of Charlotte Brontë, whose Angrian writings were now well known, surely operates as the unspoken model here. Yet this determinedly positive representation is offset by the actual details of the game, and her own expressed doubts. Whereas Harry could move freely amongst characters, 'I could not "be" anybody until Harry said so' (p. 321). In contrast to the Brontës' imaginative world, where Charlotte gradually became more assertive in the construction of Angria, Eleanor has no powers of initiation or choice throughout the game's twenty-year history, acting merely as a 'puppet' to Harry's 'Creator' (p. 322).

Farjeon's brief attempt at a causal explanation for the origins and domination of this fantasy element in her life ignores the possibilities then available within Freudian theory, and turns instead to a form of biological or hereditarian explanation which is expressed, nonetheless, in an almost sexualized language. Their creative imagination they inherited from their father and sense of impersonation from their mother, 'and that fluid element of our dual being, which made me alive at its inception, to Harry's wish—enabled us to secrete ourselves in a world of illusion' (p. 321). The terms 'fluid', 'inception' and 'secrete' suggest almost a further biological union of the two in this new form of birth, which, Farjeon suggests, was so fertile that 'the game of childhood had no excuse for dropping away with our growth'.

Her own development took place primarily within 'the boundaries of TAR' and continued long after her horizons should have been developing

since she had no desire for friends or experiences 'outside this powerful game'. Farjeon's reflections on these limitations extend, albeit discretely, beyond the parameters permissible to a Victorian woman writer:

When I should have been growing up, it was a harmful check on life itself, for its imaginative extension did not include natural knowledge. Because of it, I was never aware of my own sex till I was nearly thirty years old, and it took at least ten years more for emotional crudeness to get abreast of mental ripeness. (p. 322)

The passage is both surprisingly explicit and yet euphemistic. Where Charlotte Brontë's Angrian world was populated from an early stage with figures in the throes of sexual passion, Farjeon suggests her own imaginative kingdom acted forcefully to inhibit the acquisition of sexual awareness, so that by the age of 30 she had less knowledge and understanding of her own sexuality than we might now expect from a 10-year-old (in keeping with the suggested time scale of the passage, Farjeon never married but started to live with George Chester Earle from the age of 40).<sup>39</sup> Nonetheless, her overall presentation of this imaginary world is not one of pathology but rather of vitalizing, creative activity, which laid the foundations for her writing career. Although her position was always passive, with the control of the game resting entirely with her brother, she shows, unlike De Quincey, no resentment. Admittedly, her brother's dominance appears more benign than that of De Quincey, but she offers no hint of the power struggles or 'strife' which ruled his imaginative life, her model of a semi-biological union between masculine activity and control and female passivity fitting almost too neatly into the dominant sexual stereotypes of Victorian medical science.

Whilst Hartley Coleridge's later failings in life were read back, at mid-century, into his cultivation of imagination in childhood, Farjeon's success as a children's writer, and the overwhelmingly enthusiastic attitudes to the child imagination in the psychology and culture of the early twentieth century, permitted her to present this prolongation of childhood activity into adulthood in a positive light. In creating his image of Hartley as a 'Faery Voyager', Wordsworth had registered his awareness that the value of such imaginative voyages resided precisely in their irreconcilability with the world of adulthood. It was easier to imagine Hartley as a shimmering dewdrop, slipping swiftly out of life, than as an adult in a realm of 'strife'. By the 1850s, Hartley became a definitive model of a ruined childhood:

indulged by his parents in his imaginative passion for creating alternate lands, he had been trapped for ever in an unhealthy childhood, hindered from making the necessary progression into adulthood. Mental health, medical and advice texts proclaimed, depended on the strict curtailment of the imagination in childhood. At the same time, however, literary texts and memoirs of childhood were opening up the unexplored territory of the child mind, suggesting greater complexity, and indeed suffering, than previously granted. Imaginary lands, as De Quincey's text reveals, were not always comforting, and could actually work to intensify the cruelties of the domestic or social realm.

In the last decades of the century, the growth of imaginative literature for children, with its nostalgic yearning for a lost world, worked together with the new evolutionary science of childhood to redefine and validate Romantic conceptions. For Sully, as for Stevenson, the child possessed the mythopoeic impulse still to be found in primitive man. The imaginative creations of the child were to be treasured as a form of lost wisdom. Thus in a late essay Stevenson noted that in the child's mind, 'there is more history and philosophy to be fished up than from all the printed volumes in a library'.<sup>40</sup> There were of course dissenters. For Stanley Hall, the imaginative landscapes of childhood were still to be feared, since they fuelled the social ambitions of a restless society, with adults seeking to live out their childhood fantasies rather than remaining in the social niche nature had allotted them. The dominant tone, however, was more positive, and in the narrative of Farjeon one can find a complete overturning of the myth of Hartley Coleridge. Childhood fantasy, prolonged into adulthood, is presented as both a disturbance of natural rhythms and the foundation of literary creativity.

# 5

## Passion

What is so hateful to the sight,  
What can so soon deform  
Features intended to delight  
As passion's angry storm?

The various forms of childhood imagination addressed in the previous sections all featured in medical science as aberrations of the mind. This section, by contrast, will dwell on aberrations of the body: the fierce, overwhelming emotions which overmastered mental control in paradigmatic nineteenth-century accounts of insanity. Passion, as a term in the nineteenth-century, carried, as now, a rich overlay of meanings. Often focused on anger in religious and didactic texts for children, it also carried unspoken associations with sexual passion as well as 'fits of passion', denoting forms of insanity. Like the figure of the liar, the passionate child was a typological projection from religious and education discourse which was to play a crucial role in the development of child psychiatry.

When Jane Eyre answers back in fury to her aunt she is a familiar figure from the moral and educational literature of the preceding decades: a passionate, deceitful child. The morally improving literature for children, published increasingly from the beginning of the century, focused sternly on the child who gave way to passion. The Revd Carus Wilson's *The Children's Friend*, for example, offered stories in virtually every issue on the dangers of passion, including the 'shocking story' of

a very little girl about three years old, [who] had its will crossed by its mother and flew into a violent passion. She screamed, and cried, and stamped her feet on the ground, and was like a mad creature with rage. And oh! (dreadful to relate) it pleased God to strike her dead in the midst of her passion.<sup>1</sup>

The girl therefore dies in the ‘midst of her sins’. Readers are beseeched to ‘beware of passion’ so that they do not repent too late.

Where the harsher, evangelical, tracts painted various grim pictures of the unpleasant ends to which passion might lead, others suggested that education might supply the redemptive powers of self-control. In the frontispiece of *Flowers of Instruction* (1820), the mother calmly holds up a mirror for a child caught in the throes of rage: education at the mother’s knee was to be the means of calming and controlling the self-will of the child (Fig. 5.1).<sup>2</sup> Thus in the 1811 text, *Ellen, or The Naughty Girl Reclaimed*, said to be a favourite with Queen Victoria when she was a child,<sup>3</sup> children were offered a series of morally educative illustrations and accompanying poem showing Ellen’s moral transformation. Starting as a ‘naughty’ girl who ‘to mind mamma will not agree’ and throws her book on the floor, and then at her nurse’s face, she learns the error of her ways and begins to take delight in books and work. Child readers are offered their own do-it-yourself humiliation kit: a dunce’s cap to cut out and place on Ellen’s head (Fig. 5.2).<sup>4</sup> As the preferences of Queen Victoria suggest, such works were no doubt pleasurable as well as chastening, offering a vicarious identification with the rebellious child at the same time as imposing their moral message.

Within this milder strain of texts, children were viewed not so much as creatures of original sin but rather as victims of their own passions which had to be curbed and controlled if they were to emerge successfully into adult life. They were not solely victims of their own make-up, however. Many texts laid the blame for childhood passion firmly on the parents—particularly the mother. The tale of *Henry Phillips, or The Life of the Angry Boy* (1820) records how an only child, ‘of good natural dispositions’, was ‘indulged by his mother in all his whims and caprices’, which served to increase the violence of his temper so that ‘by the time he was four he would fly into the most ungovernable passions’.<sup>5</sup> His career in life went steadily down hill, from being thrown out of school to being executed for murder at the age of 16, thereby also causing his mother to die of grief. Although less extreme, perhaps, in their examples, psychiatric texts also adopted this trope of the overly indulgent mother who ruins her child. As early as 1801, the physician James Parkinson had warned, in his ‘Observations on the Improper Indulgence of Children’, that early indulgence, which failed to accustom the child to disappointment, could lead to ‘sullen or furious insanity’ in adulthood,



Figure 5.1. 'Passion'. Frontispiece to Mary Elliott, *Flowers of Instruction* (1820), from Andrew W. Tuer, *Pages and Pictures from Forgotten Children's Books* (1898–9), 343. Courtesy of the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, shelfmark: 258788 e. 13

and indeed, epileptic fits in childhood arising from 'violent and outrageous fits of passion'.<sup>6</sup> Failures in parenting subsequently became part of the early discourse on child psychiatry, with James Cowles Prichard arguing in his *Treatise on Insanity* (1835) that, 'By too great indulgence and a want of moral discipline, the passions acquire greater power, and a character is formed

## ELLEN,

OR

### *The Naughty Girl Reclaimed.*

*Ellen makes her First Appearance in a White Frock, with a Book at her Feet.*

This little girl, whom now you see,  
To mind mamma will not agree,  
And though her face is fair and mild,  
You view a stubborn, naughty child ;—  
Nay, Ellen is so wayward grown,  
Her book upon the ground is thrown,  
And kind mamma, who loves so well,  
Can neither make her read or spell :



11

*Ellen stands in a disgraceful Situation,  
with the Foolscap on her Head.*

Ellen arrives at Nurse's door,  
Began her conduct to deplore ;  
But there, instead of being good,  
She sat her down in sulky mood.  
The good old dame to coax her tried,  
But only met with scornful pride :  
At last, when bade her lesson trace,  
The book she threw in Nurse's face,  
Who on her head the foolscap plac'd,  
And here she stands in school disgrac'd.



Figure 5.2. 'Ellen, or The Naughty Girl Reclaimed' (1811). Andrew W. Tuer, *Pages and Pictures from Forgotten Children's Books* (1898–9), 246–51. Courtesy of the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, shelfmark: 258788 e. 13



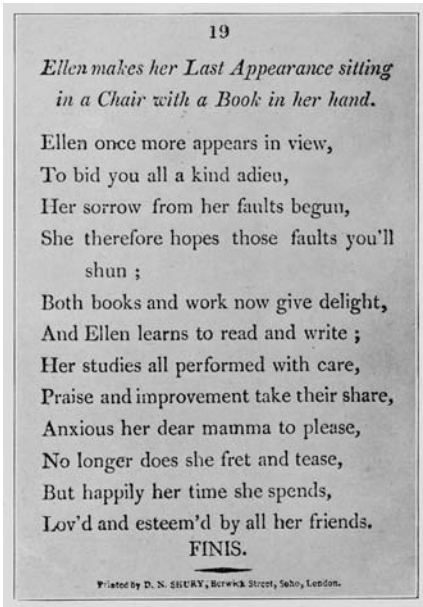


Figure 5.2. (Continued)

subject to caprice and to violent emotions: a predisposition to insanity is thus laid in the temper and moral affections of the individual'.<sup>7</sup> The moral doctrine of self-control feeds seamlessly into the medical arena to supply the aetiology of mental disease. By mid-century it was a firmly accepted premiss that, as the *Journal of Psychological Medicine* noted, fits of passion would shake the intellect so that 'Mania may be implanted in its germ, and the passionate child might, unchecked or uncorrected, become a madman or a fool'.<sup>8</sup> Charles West, in his *Lectures on the Diseases of Infancy and Childhood* (1854) warned of the imperceptible gradations by which the ungovernable temper or occasional fury of the child can pass into 'complete mania' after puberty, advice he was to repeat over thirty years later in *The Mother's Manual of Children's Diseases* (1885).<sup>9</sup>

The fiction of the period reinforced such gloomy medical predictions. Although *Jane Eyre* sets out to challenge negative perceptions of that 'picture of passion' Jane, it is happy to inflict a horrible end on that truly spoilt child, her cousin John Reed. As an adult he 'gave himself up to strange ways', his 'head was not strong', and he ruins his health and estate amidst low company

before committing suicide, thus causing his mother's stroke and ultimate death.<sup>10</sup> Medical prognosis fits neatly with the plot line, offering medical justification for the harsh, Old Testament schema of justice whereby Jane's enemies suffer a tortuous death. In Anne Brontë's *Agnes Grey*, we are offered an almost textbook case of children ruined by maternal indulgence, only this time the perspective is firmly that of the hapless governess, brought in, supposedly, to teach a spoilt brood of children. Agnes views the children largely as animals and hopes to render them 'more humanized', and hence more manageable, 'for a child of nine or ten, as frantic and ungovernable as these at six or seven would be a maniac'.<sup>11</sup> As suggested earlier, the observation, with its precise demarcation of the age of possible mania, is not based on an explicit medical judgement, but it chimes with the concurrent interest in the medical field in the possibility of child insanity. The text is clearly grounded in Anne Brontë's own desperately unhappy experience as a governess, but the perspective on childhood has its roots both in contemporary medical and advisory literature on childhood, and in the stern evangelical literature she consumed in her own youth.

There is never any question in Agnes's mind but that her role should be to subdue and control the children for their own good, thus she refuses to kiss Mary Ann good night since the child will not say certain words in her lessons, and 'I thought it my absolute duty to crush this vicious tendency in the bud'.<sup>12</sup> In Agnes's view, the children are quite unbearable—they display violent outbursts of rage as well as insolence and defiance. At one point she recounts, with reference to 7-year-old Tom, how, 'in his most violent moods, my only recourse was to throw him on his back, and hold his hands and feet till the frenzy was somewhat abated'. Behaviour which could, she suggests, have been cured by 'a good birch rod' is allowed to grow into a kind of mania so that her own actions, as depicted by Brontë, resemble those of a lunatic asylum keeper.<sup>13</sup> From a modern perspective one might wonder, however, to what degree her own system of management is producing the behaviour she abhors. In her battles with Mary Ann to get her to say the 'word' she recounts how 'I would shake her violently by the shoulders, or pull her long hair, or put her in the corner,—for which she punished me with loud, shrill, piercing screams, that went through my head like a knife'. Agnes's focus is on her own suffering, caused by the parents' faulty management of the children, which accentuates, rather than suppresses, their animal natures. In discussion with her saintly mother she agrees the problems were not her fault, yet 'it is very unpleasant to live

with such unimpressible, incomprehensible creatures. You cannot love them.<sup>14</sup> Her verdict is uncannily close to that of Jane Eyre's Aunt Reed, or of the servant Abbott who observes, 'one really cannot care for such a little toad as that'.<sup>15</sup> In contrast to *Jane Eyre*, *Agnes Grey* offers the servant's perspective on the passionate middle-class child—spoilt, animalistic beings who defy comprehension.

With the emergence of sensation fiction, faulty mothers, ruined children, and suicidal young men become a fictional staple, from Mrs Henry Wood's first work, *Danesbury House*, a temperance text warning of the dangers of drink, to *Mrs Halliburton's Troubles*, which features an even more graphic suicide of a spoilt young man.<sup>16</sup> About this time, however, the medical discourse also begins to shift, so that heredity starts to figure more explicitly in explorations of childhood passion. Jacques Joseph Moreau, in *La Psychologie morbide*, reprinted all Esquirol's cases of childhood insanity, but argued that heredity was the primary cause. We have all known, he argues, children who were the despair of their parents 'par leur indocilité, l'emportement de leurs petites passions, l'inertie, ou la violence qu'ils opposent à toute discipline'; such children are 'un exemple de l'action de l'hérédité à son premier degré'.<sup>17</sup> Such notions of inherited childhood insanity quickly permeated the fiction of the period.

In one of her first stories, 'St Martin's Eve', published anonymously in the *New Monthly Magazine* 1853, Ellen Wood offered a startling account of female passion. The protagonist, Charlotte St John, conceives a violent, jealous hatred of her stepson Benja, which increases in intensity when her own son is born. On one occasion she batters his head on a table and tears his clothes, and finally, in an extraordinary scene, when his clothes are alight, she does nothing to save him, but actively beats him and leaves him to burn to death. Such behaviour is traced to the fact that in girlhood she had been subject to 'fits of ungovernable rage, so violent, that they seemed to fall little short of insanity'.<sup>18</sup> The suggestion of adult insanity lying in germ in infancy is firmly planted, but it is not until the later book version of the same name (published in 1866), that her insanity is directly traced to heredity. The family doctor, Mr Pym, watches Charlotte throughout her childhood, waiting for her to show signs of the insanity suffered by her father, who had himself inherited the disease. Unlike Charlotte herself, her father had shown little sign of the illness in youth. A few days before Charlotte's birth, however, he had an attack of jealous madness and tried to kill his wife with a razor. He subsequently died 'raving mad', having had a

second attack on seeing his newborn baby. In this revised version, Charlotte is connected from birth with insanity, and her mother, who had sworn she would ensure her daughter never married, fails to achieve this end. Charlotte inherits her father's jealous disposition, 'but in her it was in excess so great as to be in itself a species of madness', and she exhibits alarming symptoms from early childhood.<sup>19</sup> Children, it seems, are not only able to inherit insanity from their parents, but its forms occur earlier, and with greater intensity in the following generations. Parental responsibility for childish passion now takes on new forms. From the kindly, unintentional folly of indulging one's children, we move to the crime of self-indulgence, which, as Morel was to argue, would have repercussions down the generations.

As we have seen from *Jane Eyre*, however, fictional projections of childhood passion at this period were not entirely negative. While Charlotte Brontë was only too happy to place John Reed in the category of the spoilt child who subsequently suffers from mental instability and suicidal impulses, she created in Jane a new sort of heroine, a child who is both passionate and moral. Unlike so many of her predecessors, whose sufferings were designed to tear the heartstrings of the reader, she is not a patient, long-suffering victim but rather one who defies adult authority and speaks out loudly and passionately against injustice. The dying Mrs Reed recalls how she 'talked to me once like something mad, or like a fiend—no child ever spoke or looked as she did'. She returns again and again to Jane's unchildlike qualities: the fury with which she had turned on her, and the 'unchildlike look and voice with which you affirmed that the very thought of me made you sick'. Such an assertion of rights on the part of a child forms a category confusion Mrs Reed is unable to negotiate, 'as if an animal that I had struck or pushed had looked up at me with human eyes and cursed me in a man's voice'.<sup>20</sup> Once a child leaves the space of passivity it becomes threateningly unknowable, placed in positions of alterity to adult rationality—mad, devil or animal. The 'naughty child' of the morally improving texts is given her own voice and allowed to vindicate herself: passion is no longer a flaw but a sign of strength. As Jane remarks: 'My disposition is not as bad as you think; I am passionate but not vindictive.' Where 'passion' had tended to mean rage or fury, it is now given positive attributes, associated with emotional and moral integrity and depth.

Following *Jane Eyre* there is a marked increase in fiction offered through a child's perspective, and passionate female heroines. The high-church novelist

Charlotte Yonge noted in her 1876 advice book, *Womankind*, that female education should be all about developing self-restraint (in order that middle-class girls could be differentiated from the lower classes, who suffer 'from their inability to restrain themselves'). As to 'passion of the kicking and screaming form', the memory of it was so terrible that 'it must be very bad management indeed, that has not cured a girl of it by ten, or twelve years old'.<sup>21</sup> If we turn to her fiction, however, we find a far more sympathetic representation of passionate childhood. In *Countess Kate* (1862), for example, a text offered for both adult and junior consumption, there is an interesting disjunction between the overtly moralistic narrator's commentary and a tale that unequivocally vindicates its passionate heroine. Kate, a dark-haired, untidy, 11-year-old girl, with a vivid imagination and vibrant emotions, learns that she has unexpectedly become a countess, and will have to reside with two unknown aunts in London. The novel focuses on the difficulties she has adapting to their stern regime, and their bewilderment, in turn, at this 'little wild harum-scarum creature' who is 'a troublesome little incomprehensible wild-cat'.<sup>22</sup> There are many linguistic and plot echoes of *Jane Eyre*, with significant twists. After a wild game with visiting children, when they masquerade, significantly, as Arabs, Kate is reprimanded and bursts into 'a violent passionate fit of crying and sobbing' so severe as to frighten the other children. She is sent to her room and when recovered 'she poured out a wild and very naughty torrent, about being the most unhappy little girl in all the world'. Although the 'torrent' is denoted as 'naughty', it is quite clear that narrative sympathies lie with this passionate, seemingly ungovernable child. Despite her tendency to 'burning intensity' and exaggerated stories, she embodies, we are told, the 'spirit of truth'. In the denouement, she finds a more loving home, and her aunt Barbara, who had wanted her to participate in a polite, social lie, is convicted of almost destroying her charge's sincerity. The aunt's deepest crime has been to act from duty rather than affection. Despite its moral overlay, the text offers a deeply humane exploration of childhood emotion. Kate's fits of sobbing or intense nerves are portrayed as violent and excessive, without an objective correlative, but not in the end pathological. The story hangs poised between the old religious discourse, which condemned without question childhood passion, and an emerging new sensitivity to the inexplicable yet violent workings of a child's inner mind.

Another source of influence for *Countess Kate* was that other text, published two years earlier, which also deals with a dark-haired young girl who

has difficulties being initiated into the ways of respectable femininity: *The Mill on the Floss*. In Eliot's text, however, there is no trace of the judgemental, religious discourse which overlays Yonge's novel. *The Mill* places child development in a new historical perspective: not just the workings of immediate heredity, to be found in sensation fiction's preoccupation with insanity and hereditary traits, but rather the long, slow movement of evolutionary and anthropological development. Eliot was writing in 1859, fully aware of the impending publication of Darwin's *Origin*, and the text is suffused with animal imagery: Maggie is early on likened, for example, to a 'shetland pony' or 'Skye terrier'.<sup>23</sup> On her desperate sorrow when Tom is cross with her, Eliot comments, 'We learn to restrain ourselves as we get older', expressing ourselves in 'well-bred phrases' and preserving a 'dignified alienation': 'We no longer approximate in our behaviour to the mere impulsiveness of the lower animals, but conduct ourselves in every respect like members of a highly civilized society.' Tom and Maggie, however, 'were still very much like young animals, and so she could rub her cheek against his, and kiss his ear in a random, sobbing way' (p. 39).

Eliot anticipates Darwin's later work, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872), in her careful observation of the parallels between the behaviour of children and animals. Where evangelical commentators had urged children to stamp out 'animal passions', Eliot writes from a positive sense that our origins do indeed lie in the animal kingdom, and that our development into 'members of a highly civilized society', far from being an ascent to a higher plain of being, is in fact a form of fall. Tom and Maggie overcome their differences by sharing a piece of cake, 'and they ate together and rubbed each other's cheeks and brows and noses together, while they ate, with a humiliating resemblance to two friendly ponies' (p. 39). 'Humiliating' is double edged: as became clear in T. H. Huxley's famous engagement with Bishop Wilberforce, only those readers determined to oppose the ideas of evolution could find our resemblance to animals humiliating. Eliot, on the contrary, celebrates those tactile qualities of animal life which allow immediate expression and resolution of emotion. Passion is, quite literally, naturalized, turned into a natural outflow of feeling which, if unhindered by social forms, can be resolved by sobbing, rubbing, and nibbling. Stern warnings of the dangers of eternal damnation have been turned into a celebration of the sensual immediacy of childhood.

Eliot's concern with our animal ancestry is paralleled by an equal preoccupation with anthropological development. Maggie is shown with two

dolls: the first makes its appearance in the parlour, and has fits of fondness and lavish kisses bestowed upon it in Tom's absence. Such demonstrations of affection have given it 'a wasted unhealthy appearance' (p. 19), suggesting ways in which Maggie's love can be both excessive and potentially harmful, but the doll is still, nonetheless, an acceptable object for presentation in the respectable social space of the parlour. Her other doll she keeps in the worm-eaten attic, to which she retreats at times of stress. On the morning of Tom's return, when Maggie has been forbidden to accompany her father in the gig, because it was too wet 'for a little girl to go out in her best bonnet', she symbolically thrusts her head into a bowl of water, 'in the vindictive determination that there should be no more chance of curls that day' and flees to the attic where she keeps her 'Fetish which she punished for all her misfortunes' (pp. 27–8). Once a doll, this Fetish is now a mere trunk, 'entirely defaced by a long career of vicarious suffering'. Maggie soothes herself by 'alternately grinding and beating the wooden head . . . sobbing all the while with a passion that expelled every other form of consciousness—even the memory of the grievance that had caused it' (p. 28). The picture, startling in its intensity, inverts all customary representations of childhood passion. Maggie is, in common parlance, 'beside herself' with passion, yet no judgement is passed. While dolls were generally seen as objects of love upon which girls could hone their maternal skills, this one is seemingly an object of both hate and violence.<sup>24</sup>

The deliberate and repeated use of the term 'Fetish' places Maggie's behaviour in an entirely new perspective—neither the religious discourse of sin nor the medical one of insanity, but rather Auguste Comte's framework of social development.<sup>25</sup> As human life developed, he argued, it moved through three phases, the theological, the metaphysical, and the Positive. Fetishism was the very first phase of the theological stage, when 'man conceives of all external bodies as animated by a life analogous to its own'.<sup>26</sup> This schema of development was one which applied not only to the progress of civilization, but also to each individual mind. As he notes at the opening of his great work:

The progress of the individual mind is not only an illustration, but an indirect evidence of that of the general mind. The point of departure of the individual and of the race being the same, the phases of the mind of a man correspond to the epochs of the mind of the race. Now, each of us is aware, if he looks upon his own history, that he was a theologian in his childhood, a metaphysician in his youth, and a natural philosopher in his manhood.<sup>27</sup>

The principle is one which was to receive biological expression in Haeckel's formulation that 'ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny'. Comte is not concerned, however, to offer a biological grounding for his theory, and nor does he explore its implications for reconceptualizing childhood. In *The Mill on the Floss*, George Eliot takes the first steps to thinking about what it might mean to conceive of childhood as parallel with the early stages of human development, or, more problematically, with 'savage' society.

Following Comte's theory, one would expect the first stage in child life to be that of Fetishism and indeed, in subsequent anthropological development of these ideas, the idea of the doll as fetish played a key role. Thus Edward B. Tylor argued in *Researches into the Early History of Mankind and the Development of Civilization* that

Few educated Europeans ever thoroughly realize the fact that they have once passed through a condition of mind from which races at a lower stage of civilization never fully emerge; but this is certainly the case, and the European child playing with its doll, furnishes the key to several of the phenomena which distinguish the more highly cultivated races of mankind from those lower in the scale.<sup>28</sup>

Tylor offers a highly sympathetic analysis of the role of dolls in developing the imagination of the child. 'The idol', he suggests, 'answers to the savage in one province of thought the same purpose that its analogue the doll does to the child.'<sup>29</sup> Eliot not only anticipates Tylor but explores the psychological complexities involved in the child mind, where the fetish is not only to be treasured but also beaten. Social and cultural influences also play a role in shaping Maggie's violence towards her fetish, for her model for this activity comes, rather startlingly, from the Bible. The doll's 'career of vicarious suffering' includes three nails driven into its head, commemorating 'as many crises in Maggie's nine years of earthly struggle: that luxury of vengeance having been suggested to her by the picture of Jael destroying Sisera in the old Bible'. In this tale (Judges 4: 7–24), the enemy captain, Sisera, seeks shelter in Jael's tent: she offers him milk and then when he is asleep she takes a hammer and tent-nail and 'smote the nail into his temples, and fastened it into the ground'. The original illustration is possibly that from the much reproduced *John Brown Bible*, subtitled, ironically, 'The Self-Interpreting Family Bible'.<sup>30</sup> (See Fig. 5.3.) In Maggie's own subversive interpretation, this Old Testament heroine becomes a model for pagan fetishism, and the lacerating, disruptive anger of the unhappy child.



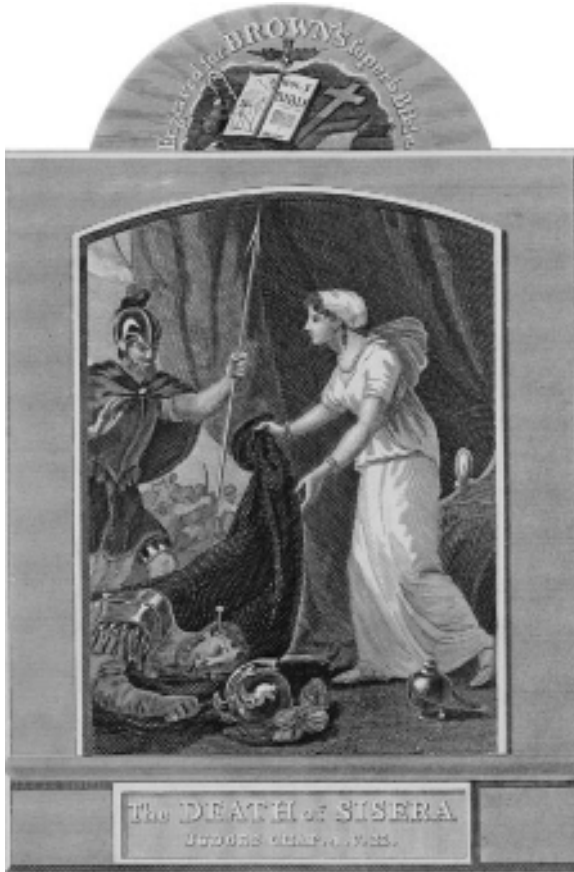


Figure 5.3. 'Jael and Sisera', Judges 4. John Brown, *Self-Interpreting Bible* (Bungay: Printed for T. Kinnersley, 1816). Courtesy of the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, shelfmark: Bib. Eng. 1816 b. 1

It appears at first as if the fetish is a shifting figure of Maggie's enemies and oppressors: the last nail 'had been driven in harder than usual, for the Fetish on that occasion represented aunt Glegg' (p. 28), the ultimate embodiment of the petty censoriousness and narrow-mindedness that engulfs Maggie in her childhood. The imagery suggests a more complicated relation, however. The fact that Maggie punished the fetish 'for all her misfortunes' suggests it is both an outside agency which can be blamed and attacked, and a figure of the self. Maggie is perpetually self-divided: she lashes out at her tormentors by cutting her own accursed hair, only to realize that she has committed a form

of self-violation, turning herself, much to Tom's amusement, into the ultimate outsider. She looks, he declares, 'like the idiot we throw our nut shells to at school' (p. 64). In the case of her fetish she realizes that if she drives further nails in, she will no longer be able to 'comfort it, and make believe to poultice it, when her fury was abated' (p. 28). The self-division of fetish beating, Eliot suggests, is the inevitable outcome in a society which places so many restraints upon its young. Maggie's punishment of the fetish and cutting her own hair prefigure her subsequent passionate acts—pushing Lucy in the mud, or running away to the gypsies, or, more dramatically, allowing herself as an adult to drift away on the tides of passion with Stephen Guest. The structure is that of the evangelical moral tale, where childhood passion presages adult disgrace, but the import is reversed, for it is the surrounding society, rather than the child, which is judged.

Eliot's introduction of childhood fetishism is part of the overall historical frame of the narrative, which looks at the society of St Ogg's as 'an outgrowth of nature, as much as the nests of the bower-birds or the winding galleries of the white ants' (p. 115). This long process of evolution is not necessarily progressive, however; Maggie's fetishism is matched by that of the adults of St Ogg's, whose religious instincts seem to rise no higher than to 'revere whatever was customary and respectable'. Indeed, Eliot suggests, 'A vigorous superstition, that lashes its gods or lashes its own back, seems to be more congruous with the mystery of the human lot, than the mental condition of these emmet-like Dodsons and Tullivers' (p. 272). Fetishism, Comte had argued, was the human mind's first attempt to raise itself from its original torpor; having done this, however, it 'obstructs all advance in genuine knowledge'.<sup>31</sup> Where Maggie's fetishism is an expression of the youthful energy of the child mind, that of her parents is a product of torpor, a sinking below the original 'vigorous' state of fetishism, or the later self-flagellation to be found in forms of Catholicism. As G. H. Lewes commented in an article on 'Uncivilised Man', published shortly after *The Mill*, 'Many of the things noticeable as characteristic of the savage are found lingering amongst ourselves, either in remote provinces, in uncultivated classes, or in children'.<sup>32</sup> The provincial society of St Ogg's exhibits just such a picture of 'survivals',<sup>33</sup> where the healthy expression of primitive religion has become ossified into a fetishism of household objects, as seen in Mrs Tulliver's over-investment in her household gods or 'teraphim', or the wonderfully observed 'funereal solemnity' of the ritual unveiling of Mrs Pullet's new bonnet, which takes on all the characteristics of a mysterious religious rite.<sup>34</sup>

The fetishised bonnet carries multiple layerings of symbolism for it links back to that key signifier of oppression for the childhood Maggie, whose rebellious locks are constantly threatened by the constraint of the bonnet. Maggie is repeatedly figured as at war with her bonnet: she trails it behind her, leaves it untied, or seizes it and fails to put it on. For Aunt Glegg, a whole social language can be expressed through the bonnet, which can be worn untied or slightly tilted to express social disapproval. Repression of natural instincts is taken one stage further in her investment in artificial hair 'fronts', whose various degrees of curls are precisely attuned to minute social distinctions, for 'to look out on the weekday world from under a crisp and glossy front, would be to introduce a most dreamlike and unpleasant confusion between the sacred and the secular' (p. 53). Eliot offers a precise, anthropological analysis of the coded language of hair and bonnets in St Ogg's society, whilst also drawing on its terms to signal the natural energies this religion of 'revering all that is customary and respectable' functions to repress. Passion in the religious and educational texts I have considered focused entirely on expressions of anger, with underlying associations with other forms of disruptive energy left unstated. Eliot, on the other hand, creates a direct continuity between the child who cuts off her hair in anger and the adolescent, meeting Philip in the symbolic Red Deeps, who removes her bonnet (p. 299). This action is later repeated in adulthood when Maggie, on the fateful day of the rowing trip, takes off her bonnet 'with hurried, trembling fingers' (p. 463), thus signalling her surrender to sexual desire which will see her swept away with Stephen on the currents of the Floss.<sup>35</sup> Childhood passion is aligned with the later expression of adult sexuality, just as the child Jane Eyre, locked in the red room, prefigures the 'bestial' Bertha Mason.

For Leonard Guthrie, writing at the end of the nineteenth century, *The Mill on the Floss* was a seminal text, allowing him to define in positive terms the 'neurotic temperament' in which 'emotions are easily kindled, strongly felt, and restrained or controlled with difficulty'.<sup>36</sup> Maggie, in Eliot's depiction, is a creature of passion, but not the wanton figure of earlier religious tracts or medical texts who had to be rigorously suppressed and controlled. Her passion is a strength, and her problems arise not from indulgent parents but from the conflict between an aspiring nature and a repressive society. In their representations of passionate children, *Jane Eyre* and *The Mill on the Floss* opened up new ways of understanding childhood which were to reverberate down the century, across a range of disciplines. The two texts operated, however, within very different frameworks. *Jane Eyre* addressed itself to the

religious and educational literature of the preceding decades, but turned its categories on their head. Lying and deceit defined the adult realm, whilst passion became a virtue, permitting the child to strike out against injustice. In Brontë's novel, Jane is not the passive, suffering child heroine of earlier literature, to be defended by a crusading protagonist or narrator, but rather a forceful, articulate figure who even in childhood draws on her inner passion to assert her rights.

Eliot, writing twelve years later, also sets childhood passion at the heart of her novel, but her reference points are less the religious texts of the earlier period than the emerging framework of evolutionary theory. Where *Jane Eyre* transformed the terms of existing discourse, *The Mill* anticipates later scientific developments. In thinking through the often-stated parallels between primitive culture and childhood, and how fetishism might operate in childhood, Eliot anticipates later anthropological analyses, whilst her exploration of animal nature in childhood is more subtle than many of the scientific and literary texts which were to follow. *The Mill on the Floss* offers a developmental perspective without teleology, in a complex layering of historical time frames. Animal passion is not to be feared or suppressed; the sensual immediacy of childhood offers a higher form than the 'dignified alienation' of supposedly civilized society. Similarly, the frank fetishism of Maggie's childhood is much to be preferred to the debased forms which rob St Ogg's of all its vitality. Like Wordsworth, Eliot celebrates childhood, but her conception is one that embraces suffering and forms of passion that encompass both anger and sexuality. In its proto-evolutionary frame, the novel prepares the ground for the literature and science of childhood of the subsequent decades.

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PART  
II

Systematic Education

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## 6

### The Forcing Apparatus: *Dombey and Son*

The interwoven discourses of child development in the mid-century explored in the previous section were intricately bound up with changing ideas on education and parental training. Insanity in adulthood, as we have seen, could be traced to errors in upbringing, whether in spoiling a child by excessive indulgence, failing to curb its imagination or its passions, or permitting nurses to traumatize it by terrifying tales. In Conolly's deeply sympathetic account, ill-judged schooling could also engender a range of mental disorders in the young. One key area of debate I have not yet considered concerns the appropriate pace for mental development. Esquirol in *Mental Maladies* observed that 'acquired idiocy' could be established in a brilliant child who burns itself out. It was a note to be developed in the *Journal of Psychological Medicine*, which issued stern warnings to parents who might seek to encourage precocity in their children, or enforce too-pressured an educational regime. The key text in these emerging debates was a literary one: *Dombey and Son*. Dickens picked up on emerging concerns with over-pressure on the young in his novel to produce a compelling picture of forced education which passed rapidly into psychiatric literature as a defining case study. In emerging scientific discourses on child development, the role played by *Jane Eyre* and *The Mill on the Floss* with reference to passion was occupied in the education sphere by *Dombey and Son*.

This section will offer extended literary readings of two mid-century novels which address questions of child education and development, set alongside an analysis of the social and scientific debates on over-pressure and precocity. Dickens's text is paired with *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* (1859) by George Meredith, which, although very different in form, is



similarly concerned with the systematic education of a child at the hands of its domineering father. Both novels address education in the context of temporal models of development and natural processes of growth. They also suggest that conceptions of child development are intricately enmeshed in the familial, social, and economic structures of their time. For Dickens, the educational pressures exerted on the unfortunate Paul Dombey are of a piece with the new models of time and space generated in the emerging railway economy of the era. The textual analyses of these novels will range deliberately wide in order to capture the linguistic and symbolic complexity of this multi-levelled understanding of child development.

From its comic opening comparison between Dombey, red and bald and about forty-eight years old, and Son, equally red and bald but only forty-eight minutes old, *Dombey and Son* sets questions of temporality and development centre stage. The incongruous mirroring encapsulates earlier preformationist views of embryology which presumed that the fully formed individual was present in miniature in the embryo, and that development was therefore simply a process of growth, not of change. It also expresses Dombey's ineluctable belief that his Son must be merely a smaller version of himself, destined not to change but simply to grow bigger, until he embodies the full-size self-replication Dombey seeks. (The female element in reproduction is excluded from Dombey's imaginings as comprehensively as his daughter Florence is excluded from his life.)

As readers of a novel whose full title was 'Dealings with the Firm of Dombey and Son, Wholesale, Retail and for Exportation', we, like the characters, are placed in a position where we are forced to have 'dealings' with a man who regards himself less as an individual than a global, or indeed universal, institution.<sup>1</sup> The material progress represented by the firm is backed by a regressive belief in a new form of Ptolemaic system: 'The earth was made for Dombey and Son to trade in, and the sun and moon were made to give them light. . . . stars and planets circled in their orbits, to preserve inviolate a system of which they were the centre'.<sup>2</sup> In this rewriting of Genesis, and the overturning of Copernicus, the ordering of time itself is placed at Dombey's command. Even Christian time is overwritten by his remorseless quest for control: 'A. D. had no concern with anno Domini, but stood for anno Dombei—and Son' (p. 12). Just as God created a Son to enable mankind to defeat mortality, so Dombey in his materialist reworking of Christian eschatology looks to a Son to ensure his own continuing life. Dickens, who had just completed a version of the life of Jesus for his own

children, has no patience with such heresy.<sup>3</sup> Dombey's ambition might be insatiable, he suggests, but it is retrogressive—founded on outdated cosmology and embryological theory, and a defiance of religion which will cost him his humanity.

Conflicting models of temporality and human development jostle together in this comically disruptive opening, firmly linking the domain of capitalist expansion represented by Dombey with conceptions and expectations of child progress. Human development in the novel is repeatedly expressed in terms of temporal disjunction. Louisa Chick (whose very name suggests a lack of development) whisks into the room, 'a lady rather past the middle age than otherwise, but dressed in a very juvenile manner' (p. 16). Even her speech seems to revert to a childish, or rather preverbal, stage as she alludes to the baby, 'that tiddy ickle sing' (p. 16). Louisa is a milder preshadowing of the hideous Mrs Skewton, who has chosen not merely to be frozen at a rather youthful stage of development, but, in an ultimate attempt at stasis, to be arrested in the precise pose of the portrait painted of her in her youth. Dickens creates a Swiftian vision of her being dismantled for the night, so that youth becomes age in a grotesquely accelerated march of time, and all that is left of Cleopatra is 'a slovenly bundle, in a greasy flannel gown' (p. 431).

Like Dombey, Mrs Skewton is, in her small way, also a seller in the marketplace, and she too has sought to force the natural temporal frame of her daughter's development. Her dismantling and final imbecility are Dickens's revenge. Whilst these unamiable characters attempt to freeze time, the narrative interest falls primarily on the child victims who are forced, conversely, into premature development, most famously that 'old-fashioned child' Paul and the boarders of Dr Blimber's school. Florence, too, is shown as suffering from 'premature' development whilst, as in so many of Dickens's novels, the forces for good are aligned with the grown-up child, both Captain Cuttle in his 'simple innocence of a child' (p. 740), and more complexly, that man-made child, Mr Toots. Behind all these various, morally laden versions of human development and arrest lie competing models of temporality.

To Florence's child perception, 'the blue coat and stiff white cravat . . . with a pair of creaking boots and a very loud ticking watch, embodied her idea of a father' (p. 13). Distance is immediately registered in the lack of touch, the disembodied accoutrements, which make up not her father but her 'idea' of 'a' father, as if fathers are not a matter of personal connection.

The stiffness of the cravat and the creaking of the boots suggest his unbending nature and oppressive tread, but it is the watch which sets up the dominant symbolic frame of the novel. Ticking loudly in place of his beating heart, it crystallizes Carlyle's vision in 'Signs of the Times' of an age where 'we have grown mechanical in heart and head'. Dickens takes seriously the question of what such mechanization might do to the processes and timing of human development. The novel is of course stuffed full of watches and clocks, from Dombey's watch to railway clocks, and from Dr Blimber's grandfather clock with its repeated refrain to Solomon Gill's infallible chronometer and Captain Cuttle's much loved silver timepiece. The preponderance is almost bewildering, so that our minds, like that of the dying Paul, seem filled with the constant sound of ticking. I will suggest that Dickens is not merely overworking his symbolism but is trying to establish a moral hierarchy of forms of temporal measurement, which in turn is linked to different conceptions of human development.

Both Paul and Florence are children deprived of childhood, forced into premature development; Paul by excessive paternal expectations, and Florence, conversely, by paternal neglect. When we first meet Florence she is cast in her father's eyes as worthless, 'a base coin that couldn't be invested' or add to 'the capital of the House's name and dignity' (p. 13). Living under a system where the home becomes a 'House', and femininity an attribute that detracts from the 'capital' of trading reputation, Florence is driven into over-rapid emotional development. She clings to her dying mother 'with a desperate affection very much at variance with her years' (p. 13). Such enforced growth is not entirely negative. Thus when kidnapped by the dreadful Mrs Brown, Florence is able to call 'to her aid all the firmness and self-reliance of a character that her sad experience had prematurely formed and tried' (p. 91). Yet, as the phrase 'sad experience' suggests, there is tremendous pathos in Dickens's representation of this child who grows up with a constant 'dread of repulse' and 'pitiable need' of affection (p. 42). Her father's presence acts as a constraint upon her mind, and on 'the natural grace and freedom of her actions' (p. 43).

In Florence's desperate struggles to understand her father's responses to her, and in later scenes to reconcile her affections for the warring figures of Dombey and Edith, she anticipates Henry James's creation of Maisie, in *What Maisie Knew* (1897), a child similarly made an instrument in her parents' hostilities. Yet while James focuses on what Maisie does or does

not 'know', Dickens pays greater attention to Florence's inner emotional life, which has been driven into such precocious development. Florence's problem is not that her father simply ignores her. Rather, he is overly conscious of her presence, watching her covertly, as the uneasiness she inspires gradually turns to hatred. Her relations, successively, with her mother, Paul, and Edith, and the affection in which she is held, evoke his increasingly violent jealousy, as all unconsciously she reveals his fundamental inability to command the love of his wife or child. In an inverted, and indeed perverted, version of the classic love triangle, Florence, in her bond of love with Paul, becomes the object of her own father's passionate jealousy.

Writing of her childhood, Anna Jameson recorded that at the age of 6 (the age of Florence when Paul was born), she suffered 'from the fear of not being loved where I had attached myself, and from the idea that another was preferred before me, such anguish as had nearly killed me'.<sup>4</sup> Florence suffers anguish, but her way through is to submerge herself in absolute and uncompromising love of the preferred child, so as almost to subsume her own identity. On meeting Walter, in their first fateful encounter, Florence thus introduces herself as 'my little brother's only sister' (p. 92). Her actual relation is more like alternative mother, however, than sister. Whilst her father becomes her love rival, she becomes the mother to his child, who only seems able to demonstrate childlike qualities when Florence is near.

If Florence is thrust precociously into premature emotional development, Paul is associated from his first introduction—red, bald, and deeply creased—with the qualities of age. He has not yet become an 'old-fashioned child', however. Dickens focuses initially, in striking detail, on the physical aspects of Paul's development. Dombey's sense of pride in ownership of this child who will help him to shut out the world is dealt a severe blow by the necessity of hiring a wet-nurse. He is humiliated by the awareness that he is dependent 'on a hired serving-woman who would be to the child, for the time, all that even *his* alliance could have made his own wife' (p. 27). The tangled thought, with its unstated conflation of breastfeeding and that other wifely service, sexual intercourse, brings to the fore his anxieties regarding the physical mingling of the classes in the body of his child. As Miss Tox wonderfully puts it, Polly will witness a cherub from the superior classes 'unfolding itself from day to day at one common fountain' (p. 32). Although Dickens clearly decided not to let Polly retain her own baby whilst feeding Paul, the proximity is sufficient to inspire Dombey with his only flight of

romance, his fear that the young Toodle and Dombey might be switched. He contemplates what he would do 'if he should discover such an imposture when he was grown old. Whether a man so situated, would be able to pluck away the result of so many years of usage, confidence, and belief, from the impostor, and endow a stranger with it?' (p. 31). Paternity regarded as investment brings with it a legion of fears: might the stock turn out to be worthless and working-class cunning outwit middle-class control?

While Dombey concerns himself with controlling the emotional bonds between Paul and his nurse—she is not to become attached, nor to remember him when she leaves—Miss Tox and Mrs Chick focus on improving and controlling the supply of milk. In keeping with contemporary medical wisdom, that emotions would affect the quality of milk, Mrs Chick hastens to curtail Polly's expression of grief, which 'might be prejudicial to the little Dombey ('acid, indeed', she whispered to Miss Tox)' (p. 31).<sup>5</sup> Polly is to eat whatever she wishes, as if she were a Lady, with unlimited quantities of porter, and abstinence only required with regard to vegetables and pickles (p. 32). This comic representation of their concern, and Dombey's troubling fantasies, nonetheless highlights the anxieties surrounding the physical conjunction of the classes produced by a wet-nurse. Whereas servants attended silently to the cleansing and adornment of the body, the wet-nurse offers up her own body as nutriment for the middle-class child. Dombey himself refers to Polly Toodle only as a nurse (and also strips her of her own name so that she becomes the anonymous 'Richards'). The narrator, however, employs the more symbolically loaded term of 'foster-mother' (p. 35), highlighting the ways in which Polly will indeed fulfil all the caring functions, both physical and emotional, of a mother.

To foster is to offer nourishment, but also to care for and to help to grow. In an unusual step, even Mr Toodle is referred to as the foster-father of Paul: Mr Dombey 'motioned his child's foster-father to the door' (p. 30). Normally, foster-father would only apply where the child had been resident with the couple. Dickens's usage here expresses Dombey's own unstated fears, whilst also underscoring his own inadequacy as a father. The moment anticipates the later scene when Dombey, about to board the train for Leamington, is approached by Toodle wearing mourning for Paul, and thus stimulating a rage of humiliation in Dombey: 'So! From high to low, at home or abroad, from Florence in his great house to the coarse churl who was feeding the fire then smoking before them, every one set up some claim or other to a share in his dead boy, and was a bidder against him!' (p. 310).

The innocent Toodle is to 'feed the fire' for Dombey in more ways than one, evoking spasms of rage that even in death his son is not his to control, but forms part of a wider network that Dombey can only conceive as a hostile auction.

Despite Dombey's fears, Paul actively thrives under Polly's nursing: 'Little Paul, suffering no contamination from the blood of the Toodles, grew stouter and stronger every day' (p. 58). The mingling of the classes, which anticipates Florence's later union with Walter, is positively healthful. Paul's decline stems from the point when, in Mrs Chick's words, the child is 'prematurely deprived of its natural nourishment' (p. 100). The fateful visit to the Toodles' house, which brings Paul into even closer proximity with his foster family, and leads to Florence discovering an alternate family in Walter, Solomon Gills, and Captain Cuttle, precipitates Polly's dismissal and Paul's 'premature' weaning.

Under the 'attentive eyes of Time' Paul becomes a 'talking, walking, wondering Dombey' (p. 107), but it is the latter attribute which is to dominate in this 'old-fashioned' child who pines away. His development turns into a 'dangerous . . . steeple-chase' where 'Every tooth was a break-neck fence, and every pimple in the measles a stone wall to him. . . . Some bird of prey got into his throat instead of the thrush; and the very chickens, turning ferocious . . . worried him like tiger-cats' (p. 107). The periods of the first and second dentition, all the domestic medical manuals warned, were of great danger to a child (Paul actually dies around the period of second dentition).<sup>6</sup> Dickens takes such common medical lore and plays with the metaphorical dimensions of the names, so that Paul is viciously assaulted by a bird of prey and tiger; the domesticated order of childhood diseases such as thrush or chickenpox is replaced by the world of the jungle.

Paul's sufferings are not primarily physical, however, but mental, as the weight of Dombey's expectations similarly distorts his psychological growth, turning domestic order into a state of grotesque inversion. Dombey cannot wait for Paul to grow; his dominant feeling, which intensifies with time, is impatience. His heart, insofar as it is capable of taking an impression, has an image of his son, 'though not so much as an infant, or as a boy, but as a grown man—the "Son" of the Firm' (p. 109). It is with this imaginary adult that he 'held such constant communication in his thoughts' (*ibid.*). Dombey is torn: believing himself to love his son, he cannot reconcile the alter ego who figures in these solipsistic self-communings with the child placed before him. He wishes to 'buy off' Paul from childhood. As Carker

later observes, 'Dombey and Son know neither time, nor place, nor season, but bear them all down' (p. 573). The imperialist and capitalist enterprise which is the Firm annihilates all natural distinctions of space and time. Translated into domestic policy, this attitude produces a yearning for a child who is not a child—the non-productive season of youth can be skipped or accelerated.

In one way, Dombey gains his desire: Paul is an 'old-fashioned child' in the sense of 'having the ways of a grown-up person; hence precocious, intelligent, knowing'.<sup>7</sup> With his 'strange, old-fashioned, thoughtful way' and his 'precocious mood[s]' he is like 'one of those terrible little Beings in the Fairy tales, who, at a hundred and fifty or two hundred years of age, fantastically represent the children for whom they have been substituted' (p. 109). In keeping with the malign literalism of so many fairy tale wishes, Dombey has indeed been granted his wish: a child who is also an adult. The fairy tale changeling prefigures, in mockingly grotesque form, the domestic fantasies of the capitalist patriarch. Paul's replication of his father, so comically depicted at birth, is continued into his childhood. Once again the two sit by the fire, Paul with his 'old, old face', and both with wandering thoughts: 'Mr Dombey stiff with starch and arrogance; the little image by inheritance, and in unconscious imitation. The two so very much alike, and yet so monstrously contrasted' (p. 110). Does the monstrosity of the contrast lie in the fact that Paul, overburdened by the conjoined pressures of biological inheritance, unconscious imitation, and parental expectations, actually appears older than his father?

Paul's conversation with his father, where he questions the value of money, obviously owes something to Wordsworth's vision of the intuitive wisdom of the child, but there is a significant difference. Paul is not an incarnation of the pure wisdom of innocent childhood, living in harmony with nature, but rather a distinctly social and unnatural product of his environment. In his creation of this 'old-fashioned' child, Dickens drew together a variety of strands from contemporary culture: there are echoes of the Wordsworthian child of 'We are Seven' and of the child from Evangelical tracts who was 'too good for this world' and so destined for an early death. He is also, however, directly engaging with educational and psychological debates about child development which stretch back to Rousseau.

At the time of writing *Dombey and Son* Dickens was deeply preoccupied with questions of education. He had recently toured various educational establishments to decide where to place his own son, Charley,

and on reaching Lausanne he wrote to Lord Morpeth, just a week before starting *Dombey and Son*, indicating his desire for a Commissionership or Inspectorship: 'On any questions connected with the Education of the People, the elevation of their character, the improvement of their dwellings, their greater protection against disease and vice—or with the treatment of Criminals or the administration of Prison Discipline . . .'.<sup>8</sup> He was also in correspondence with Lord John Russell about Ragged Schools for the poor, and indeed before leaving had proposed to the educationalist James Kay-Shuttleworth that they set up a Ragged School themselves, one where 'the boys would not be wearied to death, and driven away, by long Pulpit discourses'.<sup>9</sup> During his stay in Lausanne he repeatedly praised the Swiss schools and visited frequently at the Blind Institution, where he was fascinated, as he had been by the case of Laura Bridgman in Boston, by the progress made in teaching a blind, deaf, and dumb boy to speak.<sup>10</sup>

In *Dombey and Son* Dickens creates three different forms of educational establishments: Mrs Pipchin's, Dr Blimber's, and the Charitable Grinders attended by Robin Toodle. While Mrs Pipchin's 'infantine Boarding-House' (p. 116) is not strictly a school, Paul is to be sent there for 'bodily and mental training' (p. 115). Mrs Pipchin herself is held to be 'quite scientific in her knowledge of the childish character' (p. 118), and is known as 'a woman of system with children' (p. 121). Her attraction for Dombey lay in the respectability conveyed by the fact that her lost husband 'broke his heart' in pumping out the Peruvian mines (p. 116). Like Dombey, whose gold watch seems to stand in place of a heart, Mrs Pipchin is associated not with the pumping of the heart and the flow of human kindness but with a mechanical form of pump intimately involved in colonial exploitation and human oppression.

As Malcolm Andrews has noted, the scenes with Mrs Pipchin represent Dickens's first 'extended use of autobiographical material' in his fiction.<sup>11</sup> Based on Mrs Roylance, with whom he lodged whilst working in the blacking factory, this 'ogress and child-queller' carries the freight of Dickens's own emotions, linking the sufferings of her well-to-do inmates with that of the terrified child who had just been cast down from middle-class to working-class status.<sup>12</sup> Mrs Pipchin's 'scientific' system of child management connects her with the world of mechanization. It was a part of her 'system not to encourage a child's mind to develop and expand itself like a young flower; but to open it by force like an oyster' (p. 121). The idea



of following nature in child development goes back to Rousseau, although the specific image of the mind as a flower was even more closely identified with Friedrich Froebel, the founder of the Kindergarten movement. Although the first kindergarten was not opened in England until 1851, Dickens quite possibly came across Froebelian ideas whilst in Switzerland (Froebel had opened various schools there between 1831 and 1836).<sup>13</sup> The violence of the image of the oyster, forced open by a metallic instrument in order to be devoured, is a fitting introduction to an establishment which has a sterile garden and snails adorning the doors like 'cupping glasses', as if the inmates are going to be drained of their life's blood. Mrs Pipchin's system is to oppose nature at every point: children are frequently sent to bed at 'ten o' clock in the morning' (p. 718), and are given 'everything they didn't like, and nothing that they did' (p. 117). Dr Blimber's hothouse is anticipated in Mrs Pipchin's menacing collection of 'plants in pots', unseasonal cacti which writhe like 'hairy serpents' or hang from the ceiling as if 'boiled over' (p. 118).

In keeping with her systematic thwarting of all natural childhood impulses, Mrs Pipchin strongly approves of Mr Dombey's decision to place the 6-year-old Paul at Dr Blimber's, where he can commence his studies in Greek. 'There is', she observes, 'a great deal of nonsense—and worse—talked about young people not being pressed too hard at first' (p. 160). Such 'nonsense' dates from Rousseau, who had argued in *Émile* that book knowledge should be restricted until around age 15, for the mind can be overburdened as well as the body.<sup>14</sup> Although the concern about overburdening had passed into the common culture, it had done little to affect dominant educational practice for the middle classes. As we know from J. S. Mill's poignant *Autobiography*, children with ambitious fathers could be pressed into learning Greek from the age of 3. The fear of overburdening was also countered, from the 1820s onwards, by the doctrines of phrenology which stressed, in their crudest form, that social advancement would follow determined efforts to develop the mental faculties. Concern with irresponsible neglect of one's natural endowment here loomed larger than fears of overburdening.<sup>15</sup>

Advice and psychiatric literature from the beginning of the century had carried warnings about the effects of parental pressure on children's education. Thus William Buchan's *Advice to Mothers* (1809) had offered two contrasting exemplary tales of the malign effects of bad parenting: a young man Neddy, who had been so cosseted and protected that at 18 he looked

80 and had died at 21, and the case of Isabella Wilson, whose fond mother had proudly nurtured her intellectual development which at 14 surpassed that of all others, only for her to fall into fits and then revert to childhood.<sup>16</sup> The psychiatric texts of Prichard and Esquirol noted that overstrained and premature exercise of intellectual powers could lead to insanity, while John Forbes's *Cyclopaedia of Practical Medicine* speaks of errors in education consigning the sufferer to an early grave. Such references are rarely developed, however, and act more as a medical registration of popular social belief than a key platform of argument. It is in Dickens that we find the first really developed study of over-pressure, which was to pass quickly into medical literature as a founding case study.

Paul is to be placed at Dr Blimber's both to further his education, so that he can take his rightful place in the firm (and firmament), and also to 'wean' him from his sister, a reference which recalls his earlier enforced weaning from Polly Toodle and Dombey's outraged pride when he discovers that his son has bonded with someone other than himself (p. 161). Blimber's, in 'making a man' of Paul, is to isolate him from the feminine domain of warmth and emotion associated with Florence and to catapult him into adulthood, though as Paul forlornly replies, 'I had rather be a child' (p. 166).

Dr Blimber's establishment is described, famously, as 'a great hot-house, in which there was a forcing apparatus incessantly at work. All the boys blew before their time. Mental green-peas were produced at Christmas, and intellectual asparagus all the year round. . . . Nature was of no consequence at all.' Dickens points out the horticultural and market disadvantages of such a mode of production, for 'There was not the right taste about the premature productions, and they didn't keep well' (p. 162). The image of education as the forced production of fruit is to be found in Rousseau's *Émile*: 'Nature would have them children before they are men. If we try to invert this order we shall produce a forced fruit immature and favourless, fruit which will be rotten before it is ripe; we shall have young doctors and old children.'<sup>17</sup> The foundations of that 'old-fashioned' child Paul and Dr Blimber's hothouse of education clearly rest with Rousseau, but Dickens has taken the elements and made them his own, turning them into a commentary on the mid-Victorian age. This hothouse is not merely an aristocratic glass house designed to enhance the natural power of the sun and to produce fruit for the rich man's table. It is dominated by a great 'forcing apparatus', turning it into a product of the great machine age. The boys are not just flowers which 'blow' before

their time but shrill engines, forced to perform incessantly without attention to time or season.

The text anticipates *Hard Times* in the parallels it draws between the Gradgrindery of utilitarian education and the ceaseless working of the 'melancholy mad elephants', the industrial machines which dominate Coketown life. This transformation of organic flowering into mechanized 'blowing' receives its apotheosis in the figure of Mr Toots, whose very name instantly connects him to the railway networks which figure so prominently in the novel. He possesses 'the gruffest of voices and the shrillest of minds'. Having 'gone through' everything, he 'suddenly left off blowing one day, and remained in the establishment a mere stalk. And people did say that the Doctor had rather overdone it with young Toots, and that when he began to have whiskers he left off having brains' (p. 162). Ironically, this 'doctor' presides over a complete overturning of nature's laws: Toots's physical development, which gives him the outward appearance of manhood, is matched by an equal mental regression, leading him into a permanent form of childhood.

In Dickens's hands, Dr Blimber's hothouse becomes the condensed expression of the overthrow of natural laws of space, time, and development in the new mechanized and imperial age. One possible model for his image was the 'Great Stove' created by Joseph Paxton, future architect of the Crystal Palace, at Chatsworth. Completed in 1840, the 'Great Stove' was the greatest glass structure in the world at that time, fuelled by eight subterranean boilers and served by its own railway system. Within it were brought together plants from all over the globe, its different sections mirroring the flora and fauna of different climatic zones. It was a very model of the colonial system which, Marx was to argue, 'ripened trade and navigation as in a hothouse'.<sup>18</sup> Not only did it intensify the workings of capital, however, it also operated as a form of global hothouse, transporting unseasonal fruit and plants across the world. With the invention of the 'Wardian case', a form of sealed, miniature glass house, in the 1830s, specimens could now be safely transported across the world, leading not only to the development of the Chatsworth collections but to the transformation of the entire ecological structures of colonial nations, from tea in India to rubber in Malaya.<sup>19</sup> The 'Great Stove' paid its way by the propagation of these unseasonal plants.<sup>20</sup>

Dickens visited Paxton in Chatsworth in October 1845, and no doubt had the obligatory tour of the Great Stove. His purpose was to discuss the

setting up of the *Daily News*, which he was to edit, so briefly, in the early weeks of 1846. In Paxton he found metonymical expression of the imperial command and the reordering of space, time, and development he was to explore in *Dombey and Son*.<sup>21</sup> Not only the creator of the global environment of his hothouse, driven by the 'forcing apparatus' of its boilers, he was also a leading figure in the development of the railways. 'Paxton has command', Dickens notes, 'of every railway and railway influence in England and abroad except the Great Western; and he is in it, heart and purse.'<sup>22</sup> As newspaper proprietor, he also brought railway speed to the delivery of news. Dickens was persuaded to charter a special train through the 'railway king' George Hudson, who was also involved in the running of the paper, for the opening issue of the *Daily News* on 21 January, to bring news of the Anti-Corn Law meeting at Norwich. Six days later, a report of Peel's speech to the House of Commons on Corn Law repeal was on sale two hours after he had finished, and then transported across England by special trains.<sup>23</sup> Dickens resigned from editing the newspaper on 9 February, 'tired to death and quite worn out'.<sup>24</sup> Although angry with the publishers, Bradbury and Evans, for their interference, he was also no doubt exhausted by the sheer intensity of demand, and acceleration of time, necessitated by the newspaper.<sup>25</sup> When he had managed to sever fully his connection, he moved to Lausanne to 'separate myself in a marked way from the *Daily News*' and to write *Dombey and Son*, his meditation on childhood set in the context of a society dominated by global trade, forcing systems, and unnatural speed.<sup>26</sup>

Dr Blimber's establishment has an 'imbecile' as doorman, a fitting preparation for the life to be found within, which offers what Robert Brudenell Carter was to term the 'Artificial Production of Stupidity in Schools'.<sup>27</sup> Whereas the young man's affliction appears to be innate, that of Toots is manufactured. Rather surprisingly, Dr Blimber himself is not seen as a malign figure; he is not a sadistic bully like Squeers or Creakle, and corporal punishment does not seem to figure in the school. Rather, he imposes on school life the relentless attitude to time to be found in the wider culture. As his daughter remarks to Paul, 'Don't lose time, Dombey, for you have none to spare' (p. 183); the seemingly innocent comment holds, for the reader, a darker meaning, offering an unwitting prophecy of Paul's death. Dr Blimber is incapable of registering the fact that his 'young gentlemen' are children: he regards them 'as if they were all Doctors, and were born grown up' (p. 189). His 'forcing system', with its constant pressures of work, provides a frantic dash through a rewritten ages of man, so that the pupils

have 'all the cares of the world' by three months, and wish to be buried in the earth after six months (p. 164).

Dickens places the blame for this wanton destruction of childhood not on Blimber but on the parents who urge him on 'by their blind vanity and ill-considered haste'. Thus Dombey, on learning that Paul was naturally clever, 'was more bent than ever on his being forced and crammed' whilst Briggs's father, on hearing conversely that his son was not gifted, was still 'inexorable in the same purpose. In short, however high and false the temperature at which the Doctor kept his hothouse, the owners of the plants were always ready to lend a helping hand at the bellows, and to stir the fire' (p. 189). Dombey, in his pride of ownership in his 'Son', is replicated in the other parents, who, in mimicry of global trading, force their 'plants' into a tropical zone in order to intensify their productivity. The baneful impact of colonial life has already been felt by Master Blitherstone, whose 'temper had been made revengeful by the solar heats of India acting on his blood' (p. 157). The full negative effects of colonial overheating are to be found, however, in that hideous overripe specimen the Major, who is identified by Dickens as a figure of Time.<sup>28</sup> Yet he is clearly a form of time that is accelerated and distorted in its workings.

Boasting of his own schoolhood experience at Sandhurst, where new fellows had been roasted and then hung out of windows by their boots, the Major claims it was the making of them: 'We were iron, Sir, and it forged us' (p. 147). The British educational manufacture of such 'iron' creates the sadism of colonial rule with which the Major is identified. Whilst the pupils of Dr Blimber tend to wither or die, the Major becomes a figure of excess. Although he claims that 'he was forced, Ma'am, into such full blow, by high hothouse heat in the West Indies, that he was known as the Flower' (p. 402), he is identified by Dickens rather with the rotteness of overripe fruit. Always 'overripe' and by turns blue or black, he is reduced at one point to 'nothing but a heaving mass of indigo' in his native servant's eyes (p. 149). The Major forms an explicit link between the hothouse of Dr Blimber and that of colonial rule. In place of the civilizing mission of the white man, leading by example the native people, which featured so prominently in imperial ideology, we are offered an image of a thoroughly degraded and corrupt being, whose brutalizing of others is reflected in his own transformation into a formless mass, an embodiment of a key colonial product which was itself identified with the colour of the natives.<sup>29</sup> Although it would be wrong to see Dickens as an enlightened critic of racism or of the colonial

system per se, he does show, through the degraded figure of the Major, with his 'Imperial complexion' (p. 303), how unfitted such overripe beings were for colonial rule.<sup>30</sup> The Major's sustained torment of the 'Native' who 'had no particular name, but answered to any vituperative epithet' (p. 303) is a disturbing image of the consequences enacted when the selfish egotism nurtured by British middle-class culture is exported overseas.<sup>31</sup> The Major's relation with the Native, who is repeatedly cursed and beaten, offers the most negative image of education in the novel.

Just as the Native is bullied by the Major, so the poor beleaguered inmates of Dr Blimber's are harassed by their parents. Far from creating exotic flowers, Dr Blimber's education seems to reduce his pupils to the condition of primeval slime: they did not 'break up' for vacation, but simply 'oozed away' (p. 205).<sup>32</sup> Although the forcing system has ruined their lives, dominating their unconscious minds so that 'Briggs was ridden by his lesson as a nightmare' and Tozer talked Greek and Latin in his sleep (pp. 180–2), these children nonetheless prefer the school to returning home. Tozer, once home, was to be subject to examination at all times, whilst 'So severe were the mental trials' of Briggs that his friends always expected to see his hat floating in the ornamental pond in Kensington Gardens, 'and an unfinished exercise lying on the bank' (p. 206). The projection is undoubtedly comic, but only because of its seemingly incongruous nature: it anticipates, however, both the first discussions of child suicide in the 1850s and the major debates on educational over-pressure in the 1880s, where child suicide figured largely.<sup>33</sup>

At the heart of this forcing system lies Paul, who commences his final illness at Dr Blimber's. The great clock, which has dominated his time there, breaks down and Paul enters into a realm where 'the present and the absent; what was then and what had been' (p. 227) blend together, and mechanical time is replaced by the murmur of the sea, finally revealing 'what the waves were saying'. The meaning of old-fashioned undergoes its own series of transformations from old-looking to that of possessing values from an earlier age, achieving its final embodiment in the 'old, old fashion—Death!' and its even older companion 'Immortality!' (p. 253). While Dombey had sought to urge time on, to annul his son's childhood, and the Major, peering and prying, had become a figure of Time itself, Paul lies back tranquilly 'not caring much how the time went, but watching it and watching everything about him with observing eyes' (p. 248). Such temporal observation is made literal at night, when 'he would lie and watch the

many-coloured ring about the candle, and wait patiently for day' (p. 248). The image recalls Paul's conversation with the workman repairing the clock at Dr Blimber's. He asks 'what he thought about King Alfred's idea of measuring time by the burning of candles; to which the workman replied, that he thought it would be the ruin of the clock trade if it was to come up again' (p. 217). Paul's illness, 'only expressed in the child's own feelings—Not otherwise described', as Dickens's plan for this number indicates, is represented not by the ticking of clocks but by the movement of sunlight and water, the sunbeams flickering like water on his walls, and the 'swift and rapid river' which is carrying him to the sea.<sup>34</sup> Dombey's arrogant belief that 'rivers and seas were formed to float [Dombey and Son's] ships' is set at nought by this river he cannot control. Organic time defeats the imperial ambitions of mechanical time.<sup>35</sup>

Significantly, Dickens's set piece on the transformation of Staggs's Gardens under the pressure of the railways prepares the scene for Paul's death. As critics have pointed out, the coming of the railways is not represented as an entirely negative event. The 'miserable waste ground' has been cleared, and the whole area is more prosperous and more sanitary; the change has certainly benefited materially that centre of moral values, the Toodles family. Yet it is also associated with a thrusting arrogance that sweeps all in its path. In addition to all the hotels and coffee houses, the maps and sandwich-boxes, 'There was even railway time observed in clocks, as if the sun had given in' (p. 245). The creation of 'railway time', the supreme symbol of the industrial age, when uniform time was imposed across the country, is here associated with Dombey, who had believed that 'the sun and moon were made to give [Dombey and Son] light'. The sun is to be forced into subservience as time is thrust into tables and life directed by Bradshaw's (the term 'timetable' itself stems from the creation of the railways, but was quickly imported a few years later into schools, underscoring the ways in which the new systems of education modelled themselves on the industrial system).<sup>36</sup>

The episode of Staggs's gardens serves the narrative purpose of bringing the morally uncorrupted Polly and Walter to Paul's deathbed, but it also prepares for another vision of death—Dombey's railway ride. The scene is placed in perfect counterpoint to that of Paul's death: the image of the swiftly flowing river is set against Dombey's vision of the railway, with its speed and inexorable defiance, as a type of 'the remorseless monster, Death!' (p. 311). Polly is replaced by her husband, Mr Toodle, and the conversation

which he initiates with an indignant Dombey turns, significantly, on education. The upward turn of the Toodles' fortunes which has come with the railway is mirrored in the success of the children who have learnt to read (presumably in the sorts of schools Dickens was so keen to support). Mr Toodle participates in their developmental progress: 'them boys o' mine, they learned me, among 'em, arter all. They've made a wery tolerable scholar of me Sir, them boys' (p. 309).

Their achievements stand in sharp contrast to those of that final instance of destructive education, Rob the Grinder, who has 'gone wrong', having been placed through the arrogant patronage of Dombey with the Charitable Grinders and forced to experience persecution in the streets 'more like that of an early Christian, than an innocent child of the nineteenth century' (p. 84). At the school, he has been 'huffed and cuffed, and flogged and badged, and taught, as parrots are, by a brute jobbed into his place of schoolmaster with as much fitness for it as a hound' (pp. 309–10). The mental oppression of Dr Blimber's is here replaced by physical violence and a bestial reductionism which is reflected in Rob's fall from grace. From Robin, a name associated with a hero of the people, he was transposed to Biler, a term which captures the potential for good, or evil, of steam power, only to be turned into Rob the Grinder, which suggests both the 'grinding' of oppressive schooling and the 'grinders' of Sheffield, that notoriously violent and discontented workforce.<sup>37</sup> For the Major, the moral of Rob's fall is clear, 'never educate that sort of people', and he proceeds to visit 'physical torments' on the Native which mirror those of Rob's schooling. He suggests that 'if he were to educate "his own vagabond", he would certainly be hanged' (pp. 309–10). The Major's violence and grotesque misunderstanding bring into sharp relief once more the parallels between domestic and imperial failures in education.

Mr Toodle's intervention evokes in Dombey 'a hard kind of satisfaction' in Rob's downfall, but more overwhelmingly, an outraged sense of personal invasion, that Toodle, with his crape on his hat, had presumed to look into his heart. The child 'who was to have shut out all the world' had 'let in such a herd to insult him with their knowledge of his defeated hopes' (p. 310). The ensuing railway ride across England, whose speed 'mocked the swift course of the young life that had been borne away so steadily and so inexorably to its fore-doomed end' thus becomes a projection of the 'morbid colours' of Dombey's mind (pp. 311, 313). The railway reveals, but does not create, the horrors it exposes to the eye; it becomes a figure of the internal mental



landscape of *Dombey*, preparing for that later address to the reader where we move from *Dombey's* vice of pride to the recognition that it is 'natural to be unnatural' in a society where insanitary conditions breed equivalent moral pestilence, and 'infancy that knows no innocence' (pp. 700–1).

Tearing across England, the 'remorseless monster' reaches its final goal, a blackened dreary place, with 'deformity of brick and mortar penning up deformity of mind and body' (p. 312). Such 'deformity' is both a fitting emblem of *Dombey's* mind and, in part, its product. Dickens takes the opening conceit of *Dombey and Son* as the centre of the world around which all else revolves and turns it on its head. *Dombey*, identified with the remorseless speed of the railway, is a metonymical expression of that narrow world view which, paradoxically, fuelled industrial and imperial expansion, creating alike the hothouse of Dr Blimber's, the overripe colonial excesses of the Major, and the slums of industrial England. On a more personal note, the 'remorseless monster' also captures the emotional turmoil of *Dombey's* inner feelings, where Paul's death, and Toodle's insulting encroachment only intensify his hostility to his remaining child. He remains, in that other meaning of the term, remorseless, aware of his injustice to Florence, but refusing to repent. Unsettled by his memories of her, he nurtures his dislike into hatred. The 'forcing system', Dickens suggests, blights both the physical and mental landscape of industrial England.

The world of *Dombey* is of course set in direct contrast to a neighbouring establishment, Sol Gills's Ships' Instrument shop, 'an old-fashioned man in an old-fashioned shop' (p. 53), which offers an alternate centre of familial, mercantile, and temporal values. Connected through linguistic association with the moral values invested by the text in Paul, the shop and instrument maker are 'old-fashioned' in the sense of belonging to earlier, more highly prized, forms of labour and value. Sol's tender nurturing of his nephew Walter, ably assisted by Captain Cuttle, highlights by contrast the pathology of *Dombey's* world. The differences between the two are expressed in their attitudes to time and its measurement. Where *Dombey*, with his gold watch, sees the sun itself as subservient to the wishes of the firm and is associated with 'railway time', Sol Gills seems almost an extension of his 'infallible chronometer', which is mentioned at every turn. Sol is not just a retailer but an 'Instrument Maker', and although we do not see him actually making instruments, the identification, initially, is insistent. He presumably made his own pocket chronometer, which serves to guide him throughout his life's journey, so that after his search for Walter he returns, as we know he must, 'with his old

infallible chronometer ticking away in his pocket' (p. 860). Where Dombey seeks to bully, dominate, and pressurize time, so that the sun itself seems to 'give in', Sol Gills lovingly crafts an instrument that works with the sun, creating a form of moral lodestone that allows him to be sure of his position wherever he is in the world.<sup>38</sup> In contrast with the loud ticking of Dombey's watch, which speaks of haste and hurry and mechanical time, Sol Gills's chronometer ties him to the natural rhythms of the sea, sun, and stars (a link reinforced by his association with Paul, and the language of the waves). Sol feels uneasy amidst new attitudes to time within the rising industrial economy: 'I have fallen behind the time, and am too old to catch it again. Even the noise it makes a long way ahead, confuses me' (p. 53). Modern Time, here personified, takes on the form of the roaring approach of the steam engine.

Sol Gills's romance of the sea makes possible, as Perera has pointed out, the vision of a revived Dombey and Son at the end of the novel.<sup>39</sup> Almost alone in the novel, he has succeeded in raising a child undamaged by childhood.<sup>40</sup> Walter, who significantly is not his son, is almost a parody of happy youth when we first meet him aged 14, 'A cheerful looking, merry boy, fresh with running home in the rain; fair-faced, bright-eyed, and curly-haired' (p. 49). Dickens had intended that Walter should be subjected to another version of the fall, as his innocence is corrupted by contact with Dombey and Son. He was dissuaded, however, leaving a more simplistic moral schema, and rendering redundant the subplot where Carker the Junior (who in another form of temporal disjunction is also the Elder) hints darkly that he sees Walter following the downward path of his own younger self.

In a life governed by Sol Gills's 'unimpeachable chronometer' (p. 48), Walter alone of all the younger generation in the book follows the temporal laws of natural development, in marked contrast to the unnatural specimens of Dr Blimber's Academy and all the female figures in the text. Florence, forced into premature emotional development by her lack of capital value to the trading house of Dombey, is set in disturbing relation to two other prematurely developed females, Edith and Alice, who are conversely forced into early womanhood precisely because of their value in the marketplace.

Paul's conversation with Dr Blimber, 'Shall we make a man of him? . . . I had rather be a child' (p. 166) is recalled in Edith's exchanges with her mother: "'My darling girl'", she began again. "Not woman yet?" said Edith with a smile' (p. 408). Edith's rage with her mother centres on her loss of childhood: "'A child! . . . when was I a child! What childhood did

you ever leave to me? I was a woman—artful, designing, mercenary, laying snares for men—before I knew myself, or you. . . . You gave birth to a woman”’ (p. 431). In a hideous parody of Dombey’s desire for a full-grown son, Edith has had her childhood annulled by a forcing system far more vicious than that employed by Dr Blimber. Alice, her lower-class reflection and unknown cousin, is similarly abused by her own mother, ‘who thought to make a sort of property of me’ (p. 813).

As a child, Florence is captured and stripped by ‘Good Mrs Brown’, who also threatens, with menacing symbolism, to deprive her of her locks (the same locks which, tumbling down about her face, move the young Walter to ‘speechless admiration’ (p. 92)). Although remaining pure herself, Florence is surrounded by suggestions of sexual taint, which is itself associated with premature development. With her hair about her, Florence reminds Mrs Brown of her own fallen daughter, Alice, an ominous connection which suggests that Florence is perhaps lucky that her father regards her as an item without capital value.

Florence’s prematurity is not sexual but emotional, expressed in the depths of her self-blame. When caught between Dombey and Edith, she feels ‘almost as a crime’ the fact that ‘she loved one who was set in opposition to her father’ (p. 656). Earlier she has worried that her mother, had she lived, would have come, like her father, to dislike her—an agonizing thought that is set in the context of her fearful memory of Mrs Brown, who, for all predatoriness, had spoken fondly of her daughter (p. 378). Florence, all unconsciously, sets herself lower in the human scale than this ‘fallen’ woman. Such disturbing associations also weave around her relations with Edith. The stealthy Carker stalks both Edith and Florence; on first encountering him Florence recoils, yet is shortly drawn, powerlessly, into ‘the web he was gradually winding about her’ (p. 435). As his entrapment of Edith reaches its climax, Florence, who like Edith experiences a form of fascinated repugnance towards him, is reduced herself to stealthily watching him, an act which is at once ‘innocent’ and ‘guilty and oppressive’ (pp. 715–16).

The unspoken associations between Florence and Edith are given physical expression when Dombey, in rage against his wife’s defection, wishes to beat ‘all trace of beauty out of the triumphant face with his bare hand’ (p. 720). Instead he strikes his daughter across the breast, ‘and as he dealt the blow, he told her what Edith was, and bade her follow her, since they had always been in league’ (p. 721). Florence, innocent as she is, is here explicitly branded a whore, exposing the disturbing sexual resonances in

Dombey's feelings towards this despised daughter, who had also acted as mother to his son. For Florence, the sense of guilt is one she again internalizes. Dombey has murdered her idea of him as a father in his show of hatred towards her, but also in his association of her with the sexuality of his despised wife. Later on, at Sol Gills's shop, she 'dared not look into the glass; for the sight of the darkening mark upon her bosom made her afraid of herself, as if she bore about her something wicked' (p. 744).

At the same time as Dickens insists on the purity of his heroine, he also surrounds her with associations with premature, and marketable, sexuality. Like Dombey, who looks at Paul and sees only a grown man, Dickens wants to separate growth from change when it comes to femininity. As Sol Gills exclaims after he sees Florence after a gap of seven years, "'So grown! . . . So improved! And yet not altered! Just the same!'" (p. 291). His words are echoed later by Dombey as he finally comes to realize what he has lost in Florence: 'He thought, now, that of all around him, she alone had never changed. His boy had faded into dust, his proud wife had sunk into a polluted creature, his flatterer and friend had been transformed into the worst of villains, his riches had melted away . . . ' (p. 906). We are asked to think here of the moral constancy of Florence, who is to act as a kind of 'infallible chronometer' of the moral domain, ensuring the final success of his life's voyage. Yet, the associations with the 'polluted' Edith are still there, and we are aware that Dombey's perceptions are faulty. Neither Edith nor Carker has changed, only his understanding.

Dickens shares Dombey's desire, however, to keep Florence unaltered by the passage of time. Forced into a motherly role as a child, as a woman she is to remain a child. At 14, we are told she is 'little more than a child in years' (p. 283), while at 16 she retains 'the same child's heart within her' although she is 'as strange to her father in her early maiden bloom, as in her nursery time' (p. 659). Dombey's bewilderment by his daughter is mirrored in some respects by Dickens, who presents Florence at 17 as a confusion of the seasons: her face is that of 'both child and woman . . . as if the spring should be unwilling to depart when summer came, and sought to blend the earlier beauties of the flowers with their bloom' (p. 707). Where Dr Blimber forced his boys on into unnatural flowering, Dickens wants to hold his heroine back; she is to remain a spring flower while her age suggests that of summer. She is to be, in other words, a moral form of that otherwise hideous perversion of womanly development, the 'very blooming . . . perfectly juvenile', Mrs Skewton (p. 316).

Dickens manoeuvres Florence into the dangerous territory of adult sexuality by invoking a double layer of sanctity, not only childhood but childhood death. As the father she had loved begins to be 'a vague and dreamy idea to her, she starts to imagine Paul as a grown man, 'who would protect and cherish her': 'The change, if it may be called one, had stolen on her like the change from childhood to womanhood, and had come with it' (p. 703). Even the term change has to be cast in doubt. Florence matures by distancing herself from her love for her father and preparing to marry her brother. Walter, her adopted brother from childhood who stood by her side at Paul's deathbed, can thus slide into his destined role. On their wedding day they visit first Paul's grave, and then 'not much changed' (p. 870) from the time of their first childish walk through London, they proceed to their wedding. Paul's presence similarly presides over their marital voyage. On setting sail for China, the sound of the sea reminds Florence of Paul, 'Of Paul and Walter'; the voices of the waves once again speak of love and eternity (p. 876). The symbolism works on two levels, recasting Florence's progression into adult sexuality as a movement backward in time, a reimmersion in childhood, and transforming their voyage from a mercantile enterprise into an extension of domestic harmony (the new baby Paul is born at sea).

This rendering safe of Florence's sexuality also disarms simultaneously the threat of mercantile capitalism, identified initially with the domineering pride of Dombey and his arrogant thrusting aside of the natural laws of human development. Carker the sexual predator, who has destroyed Alice and threatened Florence, becomes the main agent of capitalist corruption in his selfish exploitation of the Firm for his own advantage and attempted elopement with Edith. In his gruesome death, torn limb from limb by a steam engine, he takes over from Dombey the symbolic association with the oppressive forces of industrial capitalism, leaving Dombey himself to be recuperated as a more benign figure of traditional mercantilism which can in turn be revived by Walter.

The ending of *Dombey and Son* seems to celebrate stasis, or even regression. Polly Toodle reappears, 'the identical rosy-cheeked, apple-faced Polly' as before (p. 849), as if all her childbearing in the intervening years has left no mark, and Susan Nipper, although married, dons her old dress, cap, and curls to serve Florence once more. Such positive regression is contrasted with that of Mrs Skewton and Mrs Brown, who had both sought to deny their daughters a childhood and are punished by being forced to enter the second childhood of senility. Mrs Skewton's attempts to remain perpetually

juvenile are rewarded as she ‘crawled backward’ into ‘imbecility’, sporting all the while a travelling robe that was ‘embroidered and braided like an old baby’s’. This grotesque inversion is completed by the detail that, like a newborn infant, she can no longer keep her own head in place (pp. 618–19). Mrs Brown, for her part, has her wits disordered and launches into hideous laughter, worse than her ‘imbecile lamentation’ and ‘the doting air with which she sat down in her old seat, and stared out at the darkness’ (p. 891). Dickens adroitly plays with the dual meaning of doting: having failed to dote sufficiently on her child when young, she is now reduced herself to the dotage of second childhood. Dombey himself is treated more gently. His mind shattered, he ‘rambled through the scenes of his old pursuits’; where he had once sought to make time bow to his command, he now wanders powerlessly amidst the scenes of his past. Even when he recovers, to become the white-haired grandfather to Florence’s children, he still turns largely to the past, his monetary instincts now attuned to an emotional scale, as he ‘hoards’ the small Florence ‘in his heart’ (p. 947).

Developmental progress is most evident at the conclusion in the educational realm. The moral redemption of Rob the Grinder, begun by Captain Cuttle in his attempts to improve his ‘mental culture’ by an hour of nightly reading (a scene which is given pride of place in the illustrated frontispiece of the novel) is continued by Miss Tox. The dreadful work of the Grinders is to be undone, and Rob is to enjoy the benefits of education now experienced by both his father and his siblings. Even the deleterious effects of Dr Blimber’s forcing system are to be muted. Mr Toots is allowed to reacquire a modicum of the sense he lost in the educational process, whilst Master Blitherstone escapes to India, the ‘forcing apparatus’ leaving no permanent impression on him at all. The text is even able to contemplate with equanimity the idea of a new generation of Blimbers as Cornelia marries Mr Feeder, and they prepare to continue unabated the grinding system. Just as the trading House of Dombey has become a home, so Dr Blimber’s establishment is now associated less with the ‘forcing apparatus’ than with family values. ‘Whatever’, Mr Toots declares in his wedding speech, ‘was done to me in the way of—of any mental confusion sometimes—which is of no consequence and I impute to nobody—I was always treated like one of Doctor Blimber’s family’ (p. 918).

Whilst the forgiving nature of Mr Toots’s speech reinforces the redemptive plot structure of the novel, the assimilation of the forcing system into a form of familial care raises as many questions as it answers. Certainly, for

readers of the time, Dr Blimber's school became a byword for the evils of contemporary education practices, whilst commentators developed Dickens's insights into the relationship between an industrial economy and its models of child development. The following section will consider this legacy, and the development of debates on 'over-pressure' and precocity through the second half of the century.

# 7

## Progress, Pressure, and Precocity

We live in an age of electricity, of railways, of gas, and of velocity in thought and action. In the course of one brief month more impressions are conveyed to our brains than reached those of our ancestors in the course of years, and our mentalising machines are called upon for a greater amount of fabric than was required of our grandfathers in the course of a lifetime.<sup>1</sup>

In his inaugural presidential address to the Royal Medical Society of Edinburgh, James Crichton Browne set the note for the succeeding decades of the century. Mistrust of this increased ‘velocity in thought and action’ fed through directly into medical and educational concerns with child development. *Dombey and Son*, which had linked the coming of the railways with the imposed ‘velocity’ in children’s education, became a key text in these debates. The novel lay behind the evocative article by medic Robert Brudenell Carter, ‘On the Artificial Production of Stupidity in Schools’ (1859),<sup>2</sup> and his earlier work, *On the Influence of Education and Training in Preventing Diseases of the Nervous System* (1855); it was repeatedly invoked by Crichton Browne in the ‘over-pressure’ debates of the 1880s, and was still a central text for Leonard Guthrie’s discussion of ‘Mental and Educational Overstrain in Childhood’ in 1907.<sup>3</sup>

Carter’s book was inspired, he noted, by observing the frequent connection between faulty education and nervous or mental disorders. As in *Dombey and Son*, the forcing system of education was linked to the new competitiveness of the industrial economy. ‘In these days of anxiety and competition’, Carter observes, ‘such disorders are greatly upon the increase.’ His aim was to offer a corrective by outlining ‘certain moral and sanitary laws which cannot be transgressed with impunity’. Medicine, in conjunction with a new



understanding of the physiology of development, would offer new ways of thinking about education. Carter supplements Dickens's accounts of the 'brain-forcing' of Dr Blimber's with tales of boys of 10 forced to work at their books until midnight, and young men and women 'crippled alike in mind and body by the effects of excessive and premature study'. Such harmful practices continue into university, leading to mental breakdowns, and the memorable, wonderfully alliterative, case of 'the wreck of a wrangler, stretched for months upon his father's sofa'.<sup>4</sup>

The arguments against forced development were taken up influentially by Herbert Spencer in his educational essays of the late 1850s. When your child is dead, he observes, it will be no consolation that it could read Dante in the original.<sup>5</sup> He takes his lead from Rousseau's disciple Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi on the importance of natural processes of development, and also Comte's theories that the development of the child mirrors that of the race, hence 'the genesis of knowledge in the child must follow the same course as that of the genesis of knowledge in the race'.<sup>6</sup> Like Carter, he also believes that there are strict laws of energy physics which can be applied to the workings of the mind. Where earlier eras had celebrated the wonders of precocious children, Spencer insists that early forced development leads only to 'physical feebleness, or ultimate stupidity, or early death'.<sup>7</sup> Those that do survive, and subsequently breed, bequeath shaken constitutions to their descendants.<sup>8</sup> 'Nature', he insists, 'is a strict accountant.' Energy diverted to intellectual development is thus withdrawn from natural growth. Spencer was one of the first theorists to apply this principle to female education and to suggest that educational over-pressure was doubly injurious to girls since it diverted energy from the proper development of the reproductive system, as evidenced by the 'pale, angular, flat-chested young ladies, so abundant in London drawing-rooms'.<sup>9</sup> The general argument against forced early education is here coerced into a more specific agenda which was to re-emerge more forcefully in the 1870s with Henry Maudsley's famous essay 'Sex in Mind and in Education'.<sup>10</sup>

The concerns with forced education became part of the cultural mindset of the period, occasioning many backward looks to an earlier, less pressured age. Thus an article in the popular periodical *Temple Bar* of 1862, 'Education, Ancient and Modern', argued that in the primeval-age children were left to the 'kind care of Nature', whilst it was 'reserved for a decrepit or overwrought civilization to smother them, like young mummies, in the bandages of premature wisdom'.<sup>11</sup> In Charles Kingsley's evolutionary fable

*The Water-Babies*, Swift's Laputa is transformed into the 'Isle of Tomtoddies, all heads and no bodies'. The pressures of useless learning and examinations have had disastrous evolutionary consequences for the children: 'their brains grew big, and their bodies grew small, and they were all changed into turnips, with little but water inside them'.<sup>12</sup> Tom grows alarmed when his conversation with a poor turnip causes its brain to work so hard that 'it streamed all over with juice, and split and shrank till nothing was left of him but rind and water'. The parents are delighted, however, with the death of their child, for they 'considered him a saint and a martyr, and put up a long inscription over his tomb about his wonderful talents, early development, and unparalleled precocity'.<sup>13</sup> Kingsley has transposed the pressuring of little Paul Dombey into an evolutionary frame, giving comic literalness to the idea of turning into a vegetable. Development, as the overall text suggests, can be down the evolutionary scale: the more the parents pressure their children, the more they descend back down to a lower state. The detail of the parents rejoicing in the death of their child possibly comes from Andrew Combe's popular work *The Principles of Physiology Applied to the Preservation of Health, and to the Improvement of Physical and Mental Education*, which offered details of parents proudly publishing memoirs of their miraculously precocious children who often expired before the age of 6 or 8.<sup>14</sup>

## Brain-forcing

The introduction of competitive examination entrance for the civil service from the mid-1850s heightened concerns about an over-pressured education system, but the issue of brain-forcing tended to fade in prominence, only to re-emerge in the late seventies following the introduction of a national education system with the Forster Education Act (1870) and compulsory school attendance in 1880. Worries about the middle-class child were now extended to the working classes, adding different factors, and transforming to some degree the nature of the debates. The *British Medical Journal*, which had run an editorial in 1860 against the system of competitive exams following the suicide of a young man, ran various short pieces in the 1870s, including the claim from an American paper in 1874 that in public schools in Massachusetts the mortality rate for children under 12 from diseases of the brain and nervous system was 11 per cent, whereas in Nova Scotia, with a later starting age and lower hours for schooling, the

figure was 8 per cent.<sup>15</sup> The same arguments would shortly be applied to the English public education system. Writing in the opening issue of *Brain: A Journal of Neurology* (1878), the distinguished physician T. Clifford Allbutt noted that society was all now for education. He paints a scenario of universal education which could be seen as an ironic anticipation of *Jude the Obscure*:

The village grocer's son goes to 'theological college', and sits up by night over his 'Evidences' with green tea in his blood and a wet cloth about his brows. The Gardner's daughter pulls roses no more, and has become a pupil-teacher; she is chlorotic at sixteen, and broken-spirited at twenty.

His argument, he claims, is not anti-education per se, but for natural growth and physical exercise, not 'overstimulation and unhealthy competition'.<sup>16</sup> Similar messages were being offered by medical and scientific writers in the more general periodical press; thus the psychiatrist D. H. Tuke had claimed in an article on 'Modern Life and Insanity' for *Macmillan's Magazine* (1877–8) that there had been an increase in headaches and nervous complaints amid the poor since the Board Schools were made compulsory.<sup>17</sup> T. H. Huxley also entered the lists with his 1877 essay for the *Fortnightly Review* on 'Technical Education'. 'The educational abomination of the present day', he argued, 'is the stimulation of young people to work at high pressure by incessant competitive examinations.' He inveighs against the encouragement of precocity: 'The vigour and freshness, which should have been stored up for the purposes of the hard struggle for existence in practical life, have been washed out of them by precocious mental debauchery—by book gluttony and lesson bibing.'<sup>18</sup> The language of precocious debauchery is very telling, seeming to blame the children themselves, whilst implicitly tying mental precocity to that other, greatly feared, arena of precocious activity, sexuality and the practice of masturbation.

Education became central to concerns about the pressures of modern life. In 1883 T. Pridgin Teale, a Leeds doctor who had attended Charlotte Brontë in his youth, published his wonderfully entitled book *Hurry, Worry and Money: The Bane of Modern Education*. The title says it all: 'Education and money', he argued, 'are rapidly becoming convertible terms' and education has become 'bound hand and foot to the thralldom of competition from childhood to manhood.'<sup>19</sup> Teale's book was part of a groundswell of public and medical concern with 'over-pressure', which would receive its most telling contribution from James Crichton Browne. An essay in 1883 on 'Education and the Nervous System' was followed by a

meeting with A. J. Mundella (author of the 1880 bill introducing compulsory education at elementary schools), and what Crichton Browne claimed was an officially commissioned government report. The government so disliked its contents that they tried to disown it, but it was published in the parliamentary papers as 'Report of Dr Crichton-Browne to the Education Department upon the alleged Over Pressure of work in Public Elementary Schools'. The report is cast not in dull, bureaucratic language but in Crichton Browne's usual colourful style. He argued that the problems of 'brainforcing', previously seen in middle- and high-class schools, were now being experienced in 'schools of a humbler description', and that 'examination fever' was now endemic: 'The supernatural terrors of the past have given place to the dread of the School Board. The infantile lip that would curl with contempt at any reference to a witch or ghoul, quivers with anxiety at the name of a Government Inspector.'<sup>20</sup> There had been, he claimed, a huge rise in nervous disorders and brain disease due to over-pressure, which was exacerbated for the poor by ill-nourishment: 'These children want blood, and we offer them a little brain-polish; they ask for bread, and receive a problem.'<sup>21</sup> It is important to note that these concerns about over-pressure were not restricted to England but were being voiced across Europe and America at the same time. Crichton Browne expressed the view, which quickly became central to European debates, that the huge rise in young suicides in recent years had coincided with the wider social diffusion of education. The 'numbers of boys and girls who on the threshold of puberty find the pains of life insupportable', he argued, 'is constantly growing'.<sup>22</sup>

The government was so alarmed by the report it asked J. G. Fitch, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools, to refute it, which he duly did, in a report published alongside Crichton Browne's in the parliamentary papers. He argued that Crichton Browne had not been commissioned to write a report, that he knew nothing about education, or the poor, and questioned his statistics and methods, which were 'neither judicious nor trustworthy'.<sup>23</sup> The final blow was his assertion that the report could not be seen as a medical opinion on the issue since it was not based on any medical evidence. The report was devastating, and educational historians have tended to view it as conclusive; this is to ignore, however, the huge social and cultural impact Crichton Browne's work created.<sup>24</sup> There were debates back and forth in *The Times*, with letters almost daily at some points, and a flood of discussion in daily papers, weekly magazines, and more specialist journals, including the *Journal of Education*,

which monitored the whole debate closely.<sup>25</sup> Meetings were held in Exeter Hall, and conferences across the country,<sup>26</sup> whilst repeated questions were raised in parliament. Even French publications discussed the issue and called for an inquiry.<sup>27</sup> The *Lancet* came out strongly in favour, insisting that Crichton Browne spoke for the entire profession, and the *Medical Times* and *British Medical Journal* also expressed support.<sup>28</sup>

The teaching profession also gave strong backing, with the Secretary of the National Union of Elementary Teachers writing to *The Times* on 13 November 1884 to put the weight of its 13,000 members behind the report. For teachers, Crichton Browne's report confirmed their campaign, waged since the foundation of the Union in 1870, against the system of 'payment by results' and the resulting pressures on children.<sup>29</sup> Although Fitch and other government responses tried to portray this campaign as emerging from idleness and self-interest on the part of teachers, there were some extraordinarily compelling critiques published which show a real commitment to education itself and an understanding of the larger issues involved. Thus an excellent letter published in the *National Review* in 1884 by a teacher of twenty-five years' standing was signed by 'An Educator, Not a Teaching Machine'.<sup>30</sup> The *Sheffield Telegraph* published an analysis of the consequences for schools of 'payment by results' which could just as easily be a contribution to the debates about English schools today:

A serious danger lies ahead. The demands in schools are so great, and the punishment for having dull and backward children so heavy, that there is a strong temptation to get rid of the exceptions on examination day. Schools that Mr Mundella quotes, who pass high percentages and have no exceptions, should explain what has become of the dull and delicate children in their neighbourhood. Perhaps the struggling school in the next street, not full, can answer. Over working children, depriving them of play and pleasure, driving forth the slow and backward—all results of this new educational invention—may be working for the Mundella Code, but it is not education.<sup>31</sup>

There is a strong sense of history repeating itself.<sup>32</sup> As the critics of the current system of league tables based on examination results argue, all pupils suffer from pressure, and schools can be driven to hide, exclude, or not recruit less well performing pupils.

It is clear that the Victorian debates on over-pressure were harnessed to many different agendas. For Crichton Browne, his campaign was on behalf of powerless children, but it was also underpinned by fears of a decline in national competitiveness due to degeneration, and the subsequent negative

impact on future generations. In one intervention he declares: 'It seems to me that it is high time for a declaration of rights on behalf of helpless children and on behalf of future generations also, whom, if we are not careful, we shall load with a burden more grievous than the National Debt: a burden of degeneration and disease.'<sup>33</sup> Not only would children die from over-pressure, those who survived would bequeath weakened constitutions to their children. Crichton Browne was also concerned with the pressures exerted on teachers themselves, particularly young pupil teachers, but this concern also manifests itself in an anxiety that teachers tended to marry each other, and their children to become teachers in turn, so that 'neurotic tendencies are handed down with greater virulence'.<sup>34</sup> The focus is once more less on the individuals concerned than the spectre of degeneration.

Like Spencer and Maudsley before him, Crichton Browne suggested that the pressures of education bore more heavily on girls. These arguments were taken up with relish by fellow medic and one of the first theorists of adolescence, T. S. Clouston. In *Clinical Lectures on Mental Diseases* (1883), he argued that, in pursuing female education, society was in danger of turning out 'psychically hermaphrodite specimens of humanity'. Young ladies in boarding schools were in danger of having all their fat turned to memory, and thus, if they reproduced at all, of bearing children who would either die young or be feeble-minded, because the rules of the conservation of force were being broken. Energy required for the development of the reproductive system was being diverted to the mind.<sup>35</sup> (Elsewhere he argued that it would be best if all adolescent girls were fat, which casts an interesting light on current concerns over child obesity.)<sup>36</sup> In a hyperbolic climax, Clouston suggested that if society continued to 'cram' its girls with education, then 'for the continuance of the race there would be needed an incursion into lands where educational theories were unknown, and where another rape of the Sabines was possible'.<sup>37</sup>

Clouston was clearly on the extreme edge of opinion,<sup>38</sup> but his arguments help explain why, in the over-pressure controversy, the strongest voices of opposition came from women. Thus Elizabeth Garrett Anderson wrote to *The Times* querying the existence of over-pressure and laying the blame largely on parents, or, more particularly, the mother: 'It cannot be too strongly insisted upon that so long as the child remains in her care the responsibility as to overwork rests with its mother, and with her alone.'<sup>39</sup> On the educational side, the eminent headmistress Sophie Bryant published a pamphlet on 'Over-work, from the Teacher's Point of View', in which

she argued that the problem was not ‘unnaturally industrious girls’ but rather those who were ‘unnaturally indolent’. For the small proportion who were overzealous in their studies, there was a ‘grievously large number of girls who are over-developed on the side of indolence’. Her concerns lay less with overstimulation of the mind than of the emotions, particularly from the excessive reading of novels, which could lead to nervous disease and an inability to control emotions.<sup>40</sup> She concluded:

This panic makes people look at one another, and especially school-girls, for signs of over-work in a way which would be absurd if it were not mischievous; and, under its influence, there is growing up amongst us on all hands, a morbid constant fear that we shall make ourselves ill if we do our duty, which is alike ruinous to moral vigour, to intellectual persistence, and to that wholesome condition of the mind which finds pleasure in all varied forms of its own activity.<sup>41</sup>

Far from accepting male arguments about female incapacity, she appropriates for herself, in a clever inversion of gender stereotypes, the masculine ethics of work and self-control while suggesting that the morbid panic about over-pressure orchestrated by the male medical profession was itself a form of hysteria.<sup>42</sup>

Although it is often assumed that the ‘over-pressure’ controversy flared up in 1883–4 and then died down, it is important to trace its cultural and social legacy, for it entered into the general mindset of the era, with articles periodically reviewing the issue appearing for the next few decades. In November 1888 the enterprising editor of the *Nineteenth Century*, James Knowles, published a public protest, under the banner of ‘The Sacrifice of Education to Examination’, which opened with the statement:

We, the Undersigned, wish to record our strong protest against the dangerous mental pressure and misdirection of energies and aims, which are to be found in nearly all parts of our present Educational System. Alike in Public Elementary Schools, in Schools of all grades and for all classes, and at the Universities, the same dangers are too often showing themselves under different forms.<sup>43</sup>

A six-page discursive preamble is followed by an extraordinary collection of 380 signatures, accompanied by a further thirty-seven who signed but expressed some reservations. The signatures are remarkable not because of their number but because of the high level and diversity of social and cultural authority represented. A long list of MPs and lords is followed by that of eminent professors, educators, and cultural commentators, then doctors, and finally distinguished cultural figures. Radical figures such as

Annie Besant and Charles Bradlaugh rub shoulders with conservative lords. Academics include the Revd Dodgson, Edmund Gosse, Max Müller, Karl Pearson, George Romanes, and E. B. Tylor; the medical section features, as one might expect, James Crichton Browne, T. Pridgin Teale, and D. H. Tuke, whilst in the general cultural section one finds a wonderful cross-section of major cultural figures, including J. A. Froude, Edward Burne Jones, W. H. Macaulay, Arthur Sullivan, and the novelists Elizabeth Sewall and Charlotte Yonge. One could not imagine today being able to bring together teachers, medics, scientists, and novelists to speak with one voice on issues of education.

At the heart of the petition lies a defence of education for education's sake and a fierce attack on the monetary nexus and competitive culture dominating the educational system. The protest was accompanied by a range of articles debating the issue, with high-profile contributions from F. Max Müller and Frederic Harrison, both condemning the culture of exams. Max Müller stated that he had argued strongly for the introduction of competitive exams but was now reversing his views, for the mischief of exams 'will poison the best blood of England'.<sup>44</sup> For Harrison, 'the Frankenstein monster of Examination [was] becoming the master of Education'.<sup>45</sup> Although the stated intention of the Symposia held in the pages of the *Nineteenth Century* was to give equal weight to both sides, the statements in defence of the system appeared feeble compared with the authoritative contributors and fiercely argued condemnations which supported the protest.<sup>46</sup>

The question of over-pressure in education united people across professions, political allegiances, and class, becoming, as in Dickens's prophetic novel *Dombey and Son*, an iconic demonstration of the problems of a new competitive industrial economy. Although the explicit target of the *Nineteenth Century* protest was the culture of exams, it drew on precisely the same arguments as those marshalled a few years earlier by Crichton Browne, and in his vision, thirty years previously, of the enforced 'velocity' of thought and action within the new industrial world. Paradoxically, however, the terms of the critique are drawn from the same energy dynamics which lay at the heart of Victorian economic theory and success. 'Nature', the protest announces, 'lays on a child a very heavy tax—a tax that should absorb the larger part of its surplus energy.' If this energy is diverted from physical growth to mental labour, it can reduce resistance immediately to illnesses, and can lay up problems for the future since 'it is taken at the expense of future vigour and capacity'. The model is that of a closed system



of monetary or energy transfer. Interestingly, the protest continues this line of thought into a further area:

It has moreover to be borne in mind that mental over-pressure and brain irritation, on the one side, are likely, just as idleness and want of occupation on the other, to increase amongst boys peculiar physical (and moral) dangers of a most serious character; dangers which are but little regarded by the public, but which always exist where boys are massed together.<sup>47</sup>

The unstated term is, as so often, masturbation (making one wonder whether all the signatories, and particularly the women, actually read the full text of the protest). It is easy to see why idleness might be productive of this vice, but why it should be associated with over-pressure is less easy to discern. The answer lies, however, in the shared underlying discourse of energy dynamics. The over-pressure controversy is the cerebral equivalent of the panic over spermatorrhoea and masturbation: both are dominated by concerns about the over-straining of limited resources and the unproductive use of energy. Indeed one finds in the texts on the dangers of masturbation that the parallel operates in reverse: the precocious sexual development of the young masturbator is often linked with precocious intellectual development.

The over-pressure controversy was complex and multifaceted, spreading across half a century and motivating very different agendas in relation to class and gender. At its heart lay the perception articulated by Dickens, that the forms of education were an analogue, or indeed a product of, the emerging industrial practices. In challenging the ethos of competitiveness and forced development, however, critics drew on the very theories of energy dynamics which fuelled Victorian economic development—the belief that the sources of energy were finite, and that energy expended in one direction would be depleted in another. The medical profession provided a vocabulary of pressure, force, and irritation, which appealed to teachers, scientists, and writers more broadly as a way of thinking about the problems of both education and child development. Twinned with the concerns about pressure on the brain was the newly emerging horror of precocity, and accompanying new models of child development. Childhood was no longer a stage to be rushed through on the way to adulthood, but a valuable process in its own right, with its own laws of slow and gradual development. Mechanical models of pressure were to be offset by those of slow organic growth.

## Precocity

Faced with increasing concerns about child precocity, the writer of an article for *All the Year Round*, aptly entitled 'Boy Monsters', turned for inspiration to that eighteenth-century comic epic of child rearing, *Tristram Shandy*:

When Mr Shandy talked of the prodigies of childhood who were masters of fourteen languages at ten, and so forth, and when Yorick said, 'You forget the great Lipsius, who composed a work the day he was born'—who but Uncle Toby could have been so judiciously rude as to remark on that last work, 'They should have wiped it up, and said no more about it'?<sup>48</sup>

Uncle Toby's irreverence, and sense of physical and mental proportion, were not shared by a culture which, as Sterne suggests, was fascinated by the possibilities of accelerating youth. In its playful time schema, in which Tristram does not reach his birth by the novel's conclusion and his father's *Tristrapaedia* fails spectacularly to keep pace with his son's growth, Sterne offered as a corrective an equally exaggerated deceleration of growth. Other writers were far from sharing his scepticism, however; thus John Evelyn could rejoice, quite straightforwardly, that his son could speak English, Latin, and Greek at the age of two and a half. For Alice Meynell, writing at the end of the nineteenth century, Evelyn's attitude was symptomatic of an era which had failed to appreciate childhood in and of itself, seeing it only as a way of achieving something else: 'Our fathers valued change for the sake of its results; we value it in the act.' Evolution, she suggests, had taught us to 'find the use and value of process' and childhood was in itself the very essence of change and process.<sup>49</sup> Meynell's positive, and highly suggestive, account of the impact of evolutionary or developmental thought on ideas of childhood fails to discuss, however, the obverse of this shift: the deep anxieties expressed about any form of childhood development which strayed from a normative model of growth. There was renewed fascination with precocity in the second half of the century, but increasing worries about what it might imply or portend. When J. S. Mill's *Autobiography* was posthumously published in 1873, his account of learning Greek from the age of 3 quickly entered into medical literature as an example of premature education (although Mill himself had focused less on his early start and more on the content of his education). As the science of child development gradually emerged, and debates about

degeneration raged, the idea of the precocious child became central to educational and psychological debates about normality. Precocity, for many, became a state less to be celebrated than feared.

Interlinked with these concerns with precocity was a general cultural fascination with the child prodigy. The popular press carried repeated articles on children who seemed to defy the normal processes of development, and prodigies were exhibited in every possible venue, from local fairs to scientific societies and state occasions and concert halls. My first example is that of the ‘calculating boys’, Jedediah Buxton (1702–72), the American Zerah Colburn (1804–40), and George Parker Bidder (1805–78). Although they were from an earlier period, they continued to attract attention through the second half of the nineteenth century. The *Boy’s Own Paper*, for example, ran an interesting article on the triumvirate in its second issue (1879), using their very different stories to draw its own moral lessons. The least-known and celebrated of the three was Jedediah Buxton. Born in Derbyshire, the son of a schoolmaster, but reportedly unable to read or write, he attracted attention at the age of 12 for his ability to perform astonishing feats of calculation. He was not publicly exhibited, but did appear before the Royal Society in London in 1754. In the eyes of the *Boy’s Own Paper*, his computational skills seem ‘to have grown into something little short of a disease’. When taken to London to see *Richard III*, he was able to state exactly how many words Mr Garrick had uttered, and on hearing sermons, he could give no account of their content, but could state how many words they contained. The writer concludes, ‘This singular individual died in 1775—a mere calculating machine to the last!’<sup>50</sup> Without a medical category of autism to draw upon, Buxton is placed outside the ranks of humanity.

The first ‘calculating boy’ to achieve international fame was the American boy Zerah Colburn, the son of a joiner in Vermont. Discovered by his father at the age of 6 making extraordinary calculations, he was swiftly taken on tour around New England to give mathematical performances. Press coverage tended to represent his father as a rapacious, deluded man. He refused offers to have Zerah educated in America, and brought him with great fanfare to exhibit in England and Scotland. He performed widely before popular audiences and nobility, and his father had an engraving done, which sold for what appears to be the fairly extortionate price of a guinea. He is depicted with shuttlecock in hand, to suggest the incongruity between his child status and achievements (Fig. 7.1). It seems that the father was

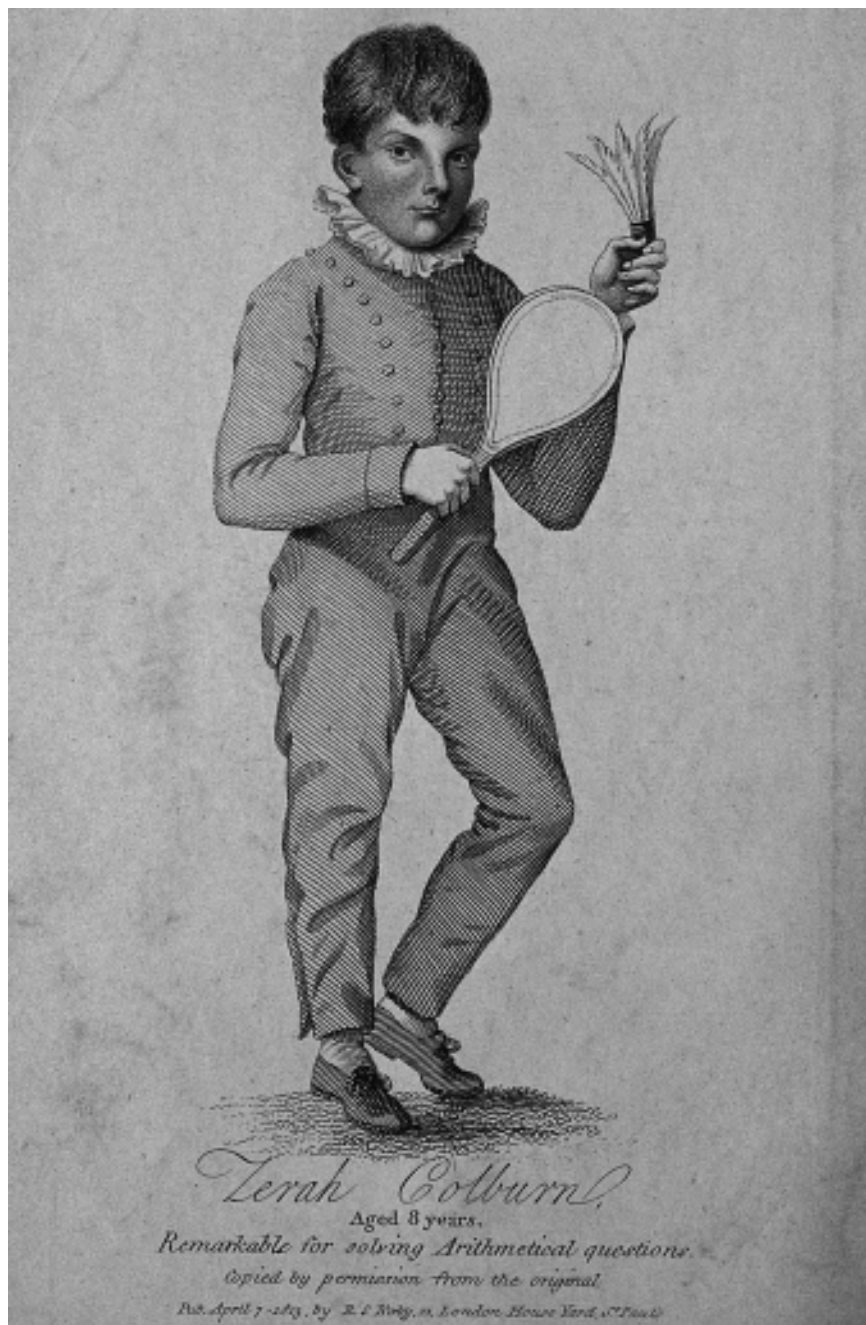


Figure 7.1. 'Zerah Colburn, aged 8 years'. Engraving, published by R. S. Kirby, London, 7 April 1813. Courtesy of the Wellcome Library, London

unhappy with the levels of financial support and offers of schooling advanced by various nobles, and they decamped to Paris, where, following the intervention of Washington Irving, he was placed in the Royal College founded by Napoleon. His father soon withdrew him and they returned to England, where history quickly repeated itself. He was placed in Westminster School, and then withdrawn by his impecunious father. In the words of the *Boy's Own Paper*, 'At the age of somewhere about twenty he entirely lost this special endowment, and went back to his own country, like Samson, shorn of his locks'. This then is constructed as a tale of a child who, unlike Buxton, had true human potential, but was ruined by the grasping behaviour of an unscrupulous father.<sup>51</sup>

The third example offered of a 'calculating boy', George Parker Bidder, is of far more heroic mould. The son of a Devon stonemason, his talents first came to light at the age of 6. He initially earned half-pennies in the village doing calculations, but his father started exhibiting him at local fairs, and then further afield until by the age of 9 he was nationally famous. He performed before the Queen at Windsor, and was placed in a school by John Herschel. But, with shades of Colburn, his father soon withdrew him in order to undertake further exhibition tours. After a trip to Edinburgh, however, a subscription was raised by the Fellows of the Royal Society and he entered university there, studying maths and geology. Unlike Colburn, his powers did not fade away; he went on to become one of the country's most eminent engineers and President of the Institution of Engineers in 1859. For the *Boy's Own Paper*, his education was the key to his Smilesian success: 'to his remarkable natural powers they thus added the advantage of a first-rate education, which enabled him in after years to rise to eminence in his profession'. What the *Boy's Own Paper* does not record is that Bidder's son and grandson went on to repeat the same success, thus retrospectively seeming to confirm the theories laid out in Francis Galton's *Hereditary Genius* (1869) and subsequent *English Men of Science* (1874) that genius was primarily an hereditary trait.<sup>52</sup>

In its tripartite division of precocity in these calculating boys into unnatural development of a narrow intellect (Buxton), too early flowering ruined by parental intervention (Colburn), and natural talent aided by education (Bidder), the *Boy's Own Paper* played into contemporary debates on precocity, genius, and premature development which had been brought into further prominence by the preoccupation with the workings of heredity in the post-*Origin* climate. As Leonard Guthrie commented in his summary

work, *Contributions to the Study of Precocity in Children*, precocity, regarded either as unduly rapid development or as an earlier than average attainment of the ultimate growth of maturity, was generally viewed as of evil significance.<sup>53</sup> From its first botanical usage in the seventeenth century, where the descriptive 'early ripeness' turns to the judgemental 'over-hastiness in ripening', there is a sense that precocity was potentially harmful. This latter sense is aptly captured by the 1820 quotation from Hazlitt offered in the *OED*: 'Their productions bear the hallmarks of precocity and premature decay.' This sense of unhealthy haste comes more and more to the fore in nineteenth-century discussions of precocity. The folk saying 'Early ripe, early rotten' was frequently invoked, and literary texts drew inventively on the notion of the overblown flower, most famously of course in Dickens's description of Dr Blimber's, where 'all the boys blew before their time'.

This sense of the dangers of early development, and of the pressures exerted by modern civilized (or not so civilized) life, feeds into the European discourses of degeneration, with the Italian criminologist Cesare Lombroso regarding precocity as 'morbid and atavistic'. For Lombroso, genius itself becomes a form of pathology, and child manifestations particularly so.<sup>54</sup> Whilst British psychiatrists such as Crichton Browne and T. S. Clouston joined in the chorus, regarding precocity as a form of disease, other scientists and writers were more measured.<sup>55</sup> Francis Galton, for example, in his careful studies of hereditary patterns of genius, had a clear investment in seeing genius, and early childhood promise, as non-pathological.<sup>56</sup> One of the key writers in these debates was James Sully, whose article 'Genius and Precocity' in the *Nineteenth Century* (1886) became the standard text in subsequent enquiries. Drawing on biographical accounts of 287 great figures in the fields of arts, science, and humanities, he explores whether they displayed ability at an early age, and whether they achieved full maturity of power early or late. He concludes that early promise is shown in four out of five cases, most particularly with musicians and artists, and less so with novelists and philosophers, a finding which he claims maps on to the history of the race as well as that of the individual, where sense and imagination preceded abstract thought. Thus 'The child and the race alike develop a crude art before they take seriously to inquiry'.<sup>57</sup> Amongst writers, poets are the most precocious: 'If... we add that lyrical poetry is to a very large extent the expression of erotic and kindred feelings which are known to be developed in great strength during the transition from childhood to youth, we are able, I imagine, to understand much of the daring precocity of poets.'<sup>58</sup> Whilst

removing genius from the accusations of pathology, Sully is nonetheless careful to map it on to normative models of growth, both in the individual and the race. He agrees with Galton that genius is precocious in that it manifests itself early, but that it also has a more prolonged development than normal. Interestingly, he has not included the calculating boys in his account, but he does conclude with a comparison between a child of precocious but stunted intelligence, who is like a tree that bears fruit too soon, and the true genius: 'he rather resembles a tree which shoots at once above the surrounding trees, though it may mature and bring forth fruit later than they'.<sup>59</sup> Sully thus succeeds in transposing the customary botanical image into a defence of the early development of genius, whilst simultaneously also drawing on all the negative connotations of precocious blossoming.

For all his defence of the precocity of genius, Sully was nonetheless slightly anxious about the category confusion it could create, as his concluding botanical analogies suggested. This unease comes through clearly in an individual case study he published the following year in the *Cornhill* (1887). Entitled 'A Learned Infant', it was a study of the famous 'Infant of Lübeck', born in 1721. Sully's article is based on a biography of the infant published by his tutor in 1779, entitled 'Life, Deeds, Travels, and Death of a very wise and very nicely behaved four-year-old child, Christian Heinrich Heineken, of Lübeck' (see Fig. 7.2). Handed over to his tutor whilst still a baby, the infant was said to have mastered the Old Testament by the age of one, the history of the ancient world, universal geography, and Latin by the age of two and a half, and the deeper mysteries of dogmatic theology and ecclesiastical history by the age of four, by which time his fame had spread across Europe. Summoned to appear before the Danish king, he gave a splendid Latin oration before turning to his wet-nurse to acquaint her 'in his favourite Latin medium, of the fact that he was thirsty'.<sup>60</sup>

Sully makes much of the bizarre fact that the infant had not yet been weaned. We are presented with the disturbingly incongruous picture of a 4-year-old who could discourse in Latin with kings whilst at the same time suckling at the breast. Sully suggests that this extraordinary conjunction was perhaps the result of domestic gender politics. Possibly, 'Frau Heineken, in ceding to the tutor so much of her maternal jurisdiction over the boy's mind, may have insisted on the nurse arrangement as a mode of asserting feminine rights over his body'.<sup>61</sup> The observation is astute, but it is equally revealing of Sully's own embattled position on the gendered front: in other works he repeatedly portrays a battle between men and women as male



Figure 7.2. 'Christian Heinrich Heineken', by Johann Balthasar Probst. Courtesy of Deutsche Fotothek and Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden



scientists seek to wrest control of infants from mothers and nurses.<sup>62</sup> Here Sully recasts this battle so that the masculine drive for control and acceleration of the boy's mind is countered by a female insistence on the domain of the body and an unhealthy prolonged infancy. In a tour de force of critical reading, Sully pushes the alimentary analogy to extremes. The infant's liking for tea is seen as evidence of 'feminine rule' whilst the soup which is poured down his throat, since he is too weak to feed himself, is made of white bread and beer, sweetened with sugar—a masterstroke, Sully comments, in its adaptation 'to the curious conjunction of infantile and mature capacities of our hero'.<sup>63</sup>

Sully does not take the obvious line of overtly condemning the exertion of such pressure on an infant, possibly because he is just as keen to find the mother at fault. He does, however, with reference to another memoir of a learned child, quote the cynical comment of an unidentified man of science: 'These prodigies of learning commence their career at three, become expert linguists at four, profound philosophers at five, read the fathers at six, and die of old age at seven.'<sup>64</sup> The jest was more than literally realized, Sully argues, in the life of the infant of Lübeck who, 'early in his fifth year... began to show signs of senile decay', swiftly followed by a gloriously stoical death, complete with all the required Latin epigrams. Writing in the wake of the 'over-pressure' debates, and with the iconic example of that old child, Paul Dombey, so firmly lodged in the cultural consciousness, Sully appears to endorse the idea that an enforced velocity of mental development will sap physical strength and lead to a death from 'old age' in infancy.

The sense of unease, and indeed distaste, Sully manifests at the category confusions created by this child are manifest in even more extreme fashion in responses to my final example—Blind Tom. Born a slave in Georgia, in 1849, he was assumed to be an idiot until age 6, when he approached his master's piano for the first time and played to perfection the pieces the daughters of the house had been working on. By the time he was 9 he had been hired out to a concert promoter and was separated from his family, touring hundreds of cities, often giving four shows a day. He could play perfectly any piece of music heard once, provide instant bass accompaniment to previously unheard music, and, most famously, play either facing the piano or with his back to it, reversing his hands. Like the calculating boys in England, he was subject to scientific examinations and invited to perform, not at Windsor but at the White House.

As one might expect, a blind black slave, deemed to be an idiot but acclaimed to have the powers of Mozart, created a sensation in the press. In 1862 an article by the novelist Rebecca Harding Davis was published simultaneously in Dickens's periodical *All the Year Round* in England and in the *Atlantic Monthly* in America.<sup>65</sup> Written during the civil war, the piece appears to offer support for the abolitionist cause, yet it oozes confusion and physical distaste. If the ordinary precocious child offered the disturbing spectacle of an old mind in a young body, and in the case of the infant of Lübeck, a masculine mind in a feminized body, in Davis's portrayal of Blind Tom we are offered a mind divided between the angelic and the subhuman, caged in what she persistently refers to as a bestial body. Tom, creeping about the farm as a child, 'was as repugnant an object as the lizards in the neighbouring swamp'.<sup>66</sup> His assumed idiocy is taken as representative of his race: 'Generations of heathendom and slavery have dredged the inherited brains and temperaments of such children tolerably clean of all traces of power or purity,—palsied the brain, brutalised the nature.'<sup>67</sup> The abolitionist cause is here allied to a belief in fundamental biological disintegration. Tom, Davis informs us, ranks next to the lowest type of Negro, having 'strong appetites and gross bodily health'. When seated at the piano he was 'like an ape clawing for food'.<sup>68</sup> Yet Davis goes out of her way to stress that his talents are not merely mimetic—they show a scientific understanding of musical structures which outstrip those of the young Mozart. Blind Tom is at once angel, scientist, and degraded animal. The Christian trope of the soul trapped within the flesh is recast to encompass, more dramatically, a 'foul bestial prison'. The article ends with a plea to readers to look in their own back alleys, where there are 'spirits as beautiful, caged in forms as bestial, that you *could* set free if you would'.<sup>69</sup> Tom is transformed into a version of the Christian everyman. Yet that mixture of repulsion and celebration, found humorously in Sully's article on the Infant of Lübeck, is registered here in full force. Questions of race bring into extreme, complicating focus the division between body and mind to be found in the precocious child.

Whilst responses to Tom were refracted through the racial politics of the time, one finds intensified some of the issues raised by other precocious children who also confounded the boundaries of youth and age, body and mind. Davis's identification of Tom as the lowest type of Negro partakes of the age's drive to classify, to rank, to define normality, whether in charts of racial hierarchies, Galtonian statistical surveys, or the careful monitoring of the contours of normal child development amidst the child study

movement to be found at the end of the century. The growing fascination, linked to an increasing disturbance, created by figures who crossed boundaries was the compelling, obverse side of a cultural drive to establish, and maintain, recognized parameters of normal development.<sup>70</sup>

Amidst the growing commercial cult of the child prodigy there seemed to be very little concern with the effects on the children themselves. In the early examples, there were castigations of unscrupulous fathers, but little attention paid to the possible sufferings of the children. Davis presents Tom's owner (actually the promoter) in a very positive light, and is decidedly annoyed when Tom refuses to perform on the night she attends: 'He required to be petted and bought like any other weak-minded child.'<sup>71</sup> Later in the century, however, as the public displays of prodigies increased even further, there were moves to rescue the children from such abnormal existences. Thus William Hirsch in *Genius and Degeneration*, an excellent riposte to the pessimism of Lombroso and Nordau which was translated into English in 1895, inveighs against 'the unspeakable outrage which vain and mercenary parents and unscrupulous impresarios, who look upon a child of genius as nothing but an article of trade, commit upon these precocities'. He recounts how the Society for Protection of Children in America had managed to close the hall where a German prodigy was scheduled to appear. He concludes: 'It is to be hoped that the time is now not far distant when the destruction of a genius for the sake of material interests shall belong to the barbarities overthrown by civilisation.'<sup>72</sup> In view of the development of the 'child star' in the twentieth century, this was clearly a pious hope.

## 8

# Science, System, and the Sexual Body: *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*

Although separated by only eleven years, *Dombey and Son* (1848) and *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* (1859) appear at first sight an unlikely pairing. The passionate engagement and moral urgency of Dickens's text consort oddly with the ironic detachment and complex textual layering of Meredith's novel. Yet, in their different ways, both address key issues in contemporary debates on child education and development, and both explore the consequences for a child subjected to an educational and paternal 'system'. In their pride and egotism, their overweening commitment to control, and their desire to live through their child, Dombey the merchant and Sir Austin Feverel, Baronet, offer parallel studies of pathological paternity, and of the dangers of 'systematic' child-rearing. Although Dombey wishes to speed Paul's growth to manhood and Sir Austin to arrest Richard's development within the pre-sexual domain of childhood, both are alike in their desire to control temporality and the processes of growth. Through their respective evocations of the child-rearing practices of the capitalist entrepreneur and the aristocratic 'scientific humanist', Dickens and Meredith explore the interconnections between mid-Victorian material and scientific culture and conceptions of child development. Meredith's focus, however, is less on 'forcing' and more on sexuality and fears of precocious development in childhood.

Meredith's novel seems to inhabit a different world from that of *Dombey*. There is no sense that this is an age of hurry and speed, where lives are dominated by the excesses of industrial capitalism and children are subject to a 'forcing apparatus' to thrust them out of childhood. In the aristocratic

realm of Raynham Abbey we seem to step back to a more leisurely age, where the mercantile values of a *Dombey* have no purchase. The novel is even more concerned, however, with the operation of a 'systematic' education. Where the 'forcing system' of Dr Blimber's mirrored the explicit mechanization of current society, the grand System of Sir Austin Feverel, Baronet and Scientific Humanist, gives expression to new Comtean beliefs that all aspects of human life, whether physical, moral, emotional, or intellectual, could be analysed, and hence controlled, according to scientific law.

In its subtitle, 'A History of Father and Son', Meredith's novel harks back to Dickens's earlier work. Both are concerned with the ways in which an egotistical father seeks to mould his son during childhood. *Dombey's* hubris is matched by that of Sir Austin; where *Dombey* places himself at the centre of the solar system, Sir Austin identifies himself with Providence. Unlike *Dombey*, Sir Austin is shown to care for his son with genuine love; the effects of his educational system are even more disastrous, however. While Paul is permitted to escape from life in childhood, Richard Feverel lives to be the cause of death to two innocent women, and to face a deadening future of self-recrimination and hatred. Meredith is pitiless in his analysis of the failures of Sir Austin, with a harshness rendered all the more severe by the self-reflexive qualities of the text. Like Sir Austin, Meredith had been left in sole charge of his son, Arthur Gryffydh (then aged 5), when his wife eloped in 1858 with his friend, the painter Henry Wallis. Self-reflexivity is intensified by the fact that, as Gillian Beer has shown, Sir Austin's habit of composing aphorisms for his 'Pilgrim's Scrip' mirrors Meredith's method of composition in his notebooks, and indeed, Meredith continued to attribute aphorisms to Sir Austin even after the novel was published. In addition, the poetry assigned in the text both to his rival Diaper Sandoe and the young Richard is drawn from Meredith's own verse.<sup>1</sup> The mocking humour of the text is also a form of self-mockery and analysis.

*Dombey* had hoped to use Paul 'to shut out all the world' (p. 310), only to find that he had let the 'herd' in; Sir Austin when besieged by literary ladies turns for protection to his paternity: 'He had a son, and he was incubating a System.'<sup>2</sup> The rhythm of the sentence and the shift to capitalization suggest which is the greater of the two. As God's spirit brooded over the waters before creating the Garden of Eden, so will Sir Austin incubate a System which will generate a new Adam. In that oddly distancing (and newly technological) phrase, Sir Austin in his role as incubator will assume both masculine and feminine roles, and God-like powers.<sup>3</sup> The System is

not only a guide for raising his son but an all encompassing world view, and an intellectual and emotional fortress designed to keep all others at bay. In his study of this earthly Father and Son, Meredith explores how a loving father nonetheless sacrifices his son to his overarching Design. There is in this world, however, no room for redemption. The *Ordeal* is a resolutely secular text, with no hint of the eternal father or the life after death to which Paul was so happily borne away. Meredith examines a new form of filial sacrifice, where Richard is subjected to an unholy alliance of paternal egotism and scientific materialism.

Where *Dombey* had sought to rush Paul through childhood, to 'make a man' of him and thus achieve his solipsistic regeneration within the Firm, Sir Austin seeks to slow down and perpetuate Richard's childhood so that he can retain paternal control. As author of the System, he has invested his identity not in an external institution but in paternity itself. The two texts focus respectively on the two different forms of childhood 'burn out' which preoccupied contemporary medical and educational commentators: overloading of the mind before it is fully developed, and too early indulgence in sexuality, which was held to weaken the system. As we have seen, both elements were there in Rousseau, but they took on new cultural meanings in mid-century England, where speed and force seemed to dominate and the doctrine of self-control became central to economic, moral, and psychological theories of behaviour. Preoccupations with natural development also took on new shades of meaning in the light of growing interest in the workings of heredity (a concern that pre-dates the publication of the *Origin* in 1859, but rapidly accelerates in the post-*Origin* period). Where *Dombey* was intent on the perpetuation of the firm, Sir Austin focuses on the healthy perpetuation of his bloodline: quality control is applied to the biological process itself.

In *Dombey and Son* Dickens had explored forms of premature mental development and 'burn out', while exerting his own mode of sexual control by retaining Florence as a child-woman, unchanged by her emergence into adult sexuality. Meredith focuses predominantly on sexual development, particularly with reference to Richard, but Florence has her counterpart in Clare, who is similarly the ignored child of the household, but unlike Florence is not allowed to 'blossom' and could be said to die, finally, of sexual repression.

The *Ordeal* addresses contemporary concerns to do with child development, but in a style that appears almost more postmodern than Victorian.

While Dickens had sought to tear off the mask of Dombey, and indeed had invoked a spirit to 'take the house-tops off' so that people could see the dark shapes within and recognize the truth of their relations to this unnatural world, Meredith adopts Sir Austin's mask as his own, layering mask upon mask in an ironic narrative mode which questions the possibilities of straightforward 'truthful' vision. In its playful intertextuality, the *Ordeal* turns back to eighteenth-century models, to *Tristram Shandy*, with its intense preoccupation with the interrelated workings of body and mind, and the *Tristrapaedia* which fails to keep pace with Tristram's development; to *Sir Charles Grandison*, which furnishes the training regime for Richard's designated mate, and, most significantly, Rousseau's *Émile ou de l'éducation*. Although critics have noted the general parallels between the *Ordeal* and *Émile*, they are both more specific and fundamental than has yet been acknowledged.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the near century that had elapsed since the publication of *Émile*, and the Victorians' very ambivalent attitudes to Rousseau's work and character overall, his educational theories were still one of the dominant elements in progressive educational debates. As Jean Paul Richter (a writer greatly admired by Meredith) noted in the Preface to his own educational text, *Levana; or The Doctrine of Education* (1806), the 'spirit of education' which animates Rousseau's work 'has shaken to their foundations and purified all the school-rooms and even the nurseries in Europe'.<sup>5</sup> Herbert Spencer, whose four 1850s essays on education were themselves to become a classic, also drew heavily on Rousseau.<sup>6</sup> One can trace the influence of Rousseau through the work of his disciples Pestalozzi, Froebel, and Fellenberg at Hofwyl (where Meredith was to send his son in 1867), but also in the various practical experiments enacted in England, such as those of Richard Lovell Edgeworth or Thomas Day.<sup>7</sup> Meredith's biographer, Lionel Stevenson, has suggested that Meredith might also have had in mind the example of Sir George Thomas Staunton, who was MP for Portsmouth during Meredith's childhood. As a child he had been brought up in semi-seclusion by his father, living entirely in adult company. He was clearly not educated in a Rousseauian manner, however, since he became a child prodigy, and at 11 accompanied his father on a diplomatic mission to China, where he was the only one of the delegation who could speak Chinese to the Emperor.<sup>8</sup> The parallels with the *Ordeal*, therefore, seem to extend only to the idea of a father dedicating himself to education of his child in social seclusion.

In creating his figure of *Émile*, Rousseau had explicitly stated that *Émile* was an ideal which could not be achieved in real life, although this clearly did

not prevent his admirers from attempting to create practical reconstructions of his fiction. For Meredith, Rousseau's 'thought experiment' clearly had attractions on two levels: biographically, his own status as a single parent faced with the prospect of educating his son, and intellectually, the possibilities of exploring contemporary debates on the relations between nature and nurture. As reviewers of the *Ordeal* noted, the idea of secluding an infant from society was not a new one;<sup>9</sup> the idea takes on new resonances, however, in the intellectual climate of the 1850s, when the idea that all aspects of human life, from the moral to the psychological, could be governed by scientific law was rapidly taking hold in radical circles. Meredith had succeeded George Eliot as literary reviewer on the *Westminster Review* (a post he held from April 1857 to January 1858) and was thus enmeshed in this intellectual milieu which was preoccupied with the ideas of a science of society as put forward by both Herbert Spencer and Auguste Comte.<sup>10</sup> As George Eliot sternly proclaimed in her 1851 essay 'The Progress of the Intellect', we need to recognize the presence of 'undeviating law in the material and moral world' which 'can alone give value to experience and render education in the true sense possible'.<sup>11</sup>

In the *Ordeal*, Meredith explores what it might mean to apply such a faith in science and system to the upbringing of a child. Sir Austin is not merely a humanist but a 'Scientific Humanist', and Richard is referred to repeatedly as 'the young Experiment' (p. 36). Rousseau's ideas are grafted onto mid-nineteenth-century preoccupations with scientific experiment and natural law as an infallible basis for psychological and ethical judgement. Meredith himself was not opposed either to the new scientific models of thought or to scientific materialism.<sup>12</sup> He is concerned, however, with their potential for misuse in fallible human hands—particularly those of an aggrieved male.

Meredith is alive to all the contradictions within Rousseau's project: his 'child of nature' is in fact a manufactured thing, created only by active engineering and incessant watchfulness. Rousseau had sought to create a new form of Eden, but the very concept brings with it the idea of lurking snakes and the fall into sexuality. His quest to create perfection in a child is itself underpinned by a terror of the child's emergence into sexuality. The whole elaborate structure whereby Émile is to be educated according to the laws of natural development, and hence without books until the surprisingly late age of 15, seems in the end to be based on a desire to thwart nature: 'Regard all delays as so much time gained.'<sup>13</sup> As in *Dombey and Son*, childhood is turned into a race against time, but with opposite ends in mind. Education is



viewed not as a form of accelerating natural developmental processes but as a mode of 'gaining time' for the tutor, extending the temporal period of absolute control before the onset of puberty, when the child becomes 'almost ungovernable' (p. 172). Rousseau, indeed, ties himself in knots trying to proclaim the 'naturalness' of his system. *Émile* is to spend his childhood in physical activities and sports, but not like those of savages since he has,

in the course of his sports, learned to think. . . . This is how I doubly gain time for him by retarding nature to the advantage of reason. But have I indeed retarded the progress of nature? No, I have only prevented the imagination from hastening it; I have employed another sort of teaching to counterbalance the precocious instruction which the young man receives from other sources. (pp. 280–1)

The use of the term 'precocious' is illuminating, since it ties together fears of early sexual precocity with those of accelerated learning. *Émile* is to be kept away from books, schools, and other children so that his imagination will not take fire and lead him into premature sexual thoughts (although he is to live in the country, Rousseau speaks only of his gardening—presumably he is also to be kept well clear of all livestock, which might similarly give rise to 'precocious' thoughts). By controlling the contents of the mind, time can be controlled and even made to offer up a double yield, in an inverse form of hothousing.

The *Ordeal* is both a parodic reconstruction of *Émile* and an exploration of whether it is possible, given the constraints of heredity and human fallibility, to create a perfect child. The parody is itself systematic. His pupil, Rousseau declares, must be rich (p. 20) and his tutor should be young, 'as young indeed as a man may well be who is also wise' (p. 19). Meredith obligingly makes Richard the son of a baronet and gives him for a tutor the 'Wise Youth' Adrian Harley (p. 33), whose cynicism and self-interestedness prove so disastrous for Richard. Rousseau argues, however, that it is the father who should take on the 'sacred duties' of raising and educating his children (p. 17), and indeed Sir Austin clearly assumes primary responsibility for Richard's development.

His System, roughly summarized in chapter 1, is itself a summary of the tenets of *Émile*: fathers should accept their 'solemn responsibility' and 'by hedging round the Youth from corruptness, and at the same time promoting his animal health, by helping him to grow, as he would, like a Tree of Eden; by advancing him to a certain moral fortitude ere the Apple-Disease was spontaneously developed, there would be seen something approaching

to a perfect Man' (p. 17). The comic phrase 'Apple-Disease', together with Adrian's christening of The Pilgrim's Scrip, 'the GREAT SHADDOCK DOGMA' (p. 11), show how clearly Meredith was aware of the terror of sexuality which fuelled Rousseau's system.<sup>14</sup> His irreverence is directed both towards the great leader of child educational theory and to the Christian Church itself, which could base its entire teachings on the consequences of eating an apple. 'Apple-Disease' playfully conflates theories of child development as a form of fruit growing with Christian theories on the consequences of the Fall.

From the opening chapter of the *Ordeal* we are aware that the System is bound to fail since it is introduced as an egotistical product of misogyny (in *Émile* Rousseau's misogyny is not fully apparent until the extraordinary outbursts in Book 5, which operate as a model for Meredith). In an almost too helpful letter, Meredith explained to Samuel Lucas that the System did have some success, in the strength of Richard's pure love for a woman, but it carried its own nemesis in that it was conceived as Sir Austin's way of 'wreaking his revenge': 'The moral is that no System of the sort succeeds with human nature, unless the originator has conceived it purely independent of personal passion.'<sup>15</sup> Meredith takes pains to leave open the possibility that a System could work; he raises the question however, of whether it would be possible for a parent or tutor to operate in such an emotionally complex area without falling under the influence of 'personal passion'.

The question is all the more fraught since at the time of writing Meredith was contesting the paternity of the son born to his wife at Bristol in April 1858 (before she finally left the country with Wallis).<sup>16</sup> Rousseau, for his part, was disarmingly honest in his acknowledgement that all his views on female inequality, and on the need for women to retain their modesty and remain within the confines of the home, were driven by the fear of uncertain paternity:

Can any position be more wretched than that of the unhappy father who, when he clasps his child to his breast, is haunted by the suspicion that this is the child of another, the badge of his own dishonour, a thief who is robbing his own children of their inheritance. Under such circumstances the family is little more than a group of secret enemies, armed against each other by a guilty woman, who compels them to pretend to love one another. (p. 325)

Although there is no suggestion that Richard, or indeed Meredith's own first son, Arthur, were illegitimate, the paranoia and sense of throbbing

personal shame which emanate from the Rousseau passage could justly be applied to that man of masks, Sir Austin.<sup>17</sup> His System is his form of defence against the mocking world, including that potential ‘group of secret enemies’, the Inmates of Raynham Abbey, and also a way of ‘wreaking revenge’ on the female sex. (Meredith destroyed virtually his entire correspondence from this period of his life, but we do know that his suspicions of womankind were so strong that he decided to take the very unusual step of having a male nurse for his child.)<sup>18</sup>

Rousseau’s own system was founded on a paradox: the child was to be brought up enjoying the freedom of nature, without the detrimental effects of swaddling in infancy, or deadening book-learning when young. He was to be subject unwittingly, however, to an utterly pervasive system of intellectual and emotional control. Rousseau advises: ‘let him always think he is master while you are really master. There is no subjection so complete as that which preserves the forms of freedom; it is thus that the will itself is taken captive’ (p. 84). Sir Austin aims for a similar form of subjection in Richard. His youth, Sir Austin decrees, should be ‘thoroughly joyous and happy’ (p. 108), so that ‘for one period of his life he knew Paradise’, as compared, he tells Dr Clifford, to ‘those abominations whom you call precocious boys—your little pet monsters, Doctor!’ (pp. 111–12). Richard’s training is to be the very reverse of that meted out in Dr Blimber’s school, but his inner subjection is to be even greater. Sir Austin later boastfully demands of Ripton’s father, “do you base your watchfulness on so thorough an acquaintance with his character—so perfect a knowledge of the instrument, that all its movements—even the eccentric ones—are anticipated by you, and provided for?” (p. 139). The words echo Rousseau’s claim that an ideal pupil ‘should never take a step you have not foreseen, not utter a word you could not foretell’ (p. 85). Such hubris is comically deflated in the novel by the bafflement of Mr Thompson, who cannot believe he is ‘listening to downright folly’ (p. 139) from such a wealthy client, and by the reader’s knowledge that Richard is at that very time pursuing an amorous course which will horrify his father.

Rousseau’s argument that the pupil ‘ought to want to do nothing but what you want him to do’ (p. 85) is transposed into Sir Austin’s even more grandiose desire: ‘Now I require not only that my son should obey, I would have him guiltless of the impulse to gainsay my wishes: feeling me in him stronger than his undeveloped nature’ (p. 139). His aim is not merely to replicate himself in another being, but actively to inhabit that person, as a

form of animating spirit, or secular Holy Ghost. He wishes not merely to guide his Son, or even to instil in him his principles, but to take over his very sense of self, so that Richard becomes another expression of the Father.

Sir Austin's will to power is all the more terrifying since, as with his heavenly counterpart, it is based on a form of love. Yet his belief in his own power of Design seems to override his genuine affection for his son, who is placed at the heart of his System. Sir Austin is surrounded, however, by 'unbelievers' (p. 112), members of his inner circle who have no faith in the 'System', although they fail to challenge him. Both the narrator and Adrian Harley treat Sir Austin with mocking scepticism. To their eyes he is a 'monomaniac', a term only introduced into England in the 1830s, and signifying a form of insanity where the sufferer could be perfectly sane on all aspects of life except the area of his obsession. As Sir Austin patrolled the corridors of Raynham Abbey at night, Adrian dismisses him as a 'monomaniac at large, watching over sane people in slumber' (p. 60). (Esquirol had advocated watching over people in their sleep in order to detect signs of insanity which they might hide when awake).<sup>19</sup> The man who had sought to keep his own bloodline clear of insanity is here convicted of insanity himself. The verdict is repeated by the narrator, who suggests that Sir Austin had the gift by which 'monomaniacs' convince themselves and others that they are speaking the 'Truth' (p. 112).

Sir Austin keeps 'rigid watch and ward' from 'his lofty watch-tower of the System' (p. 113). His System becomes the embodiment of the principles of the panopticon, Jeremy Bentham's design for asylums, factories, and schools, which for Foucault encapsulated the new 'mechanics of power' of the nineteenth century, where surveillance, by a figure or force which remains unseen, becomes the new mechanism of social control.<sup>20</sup> Sir Austin enthusiastically adopts these principles. Richard is not to be punished or controlled physically, and Sir Austin takes on the role of spy. Even when he discovers Richard and Ripton in obvious conspiracy he overcomes his desire to confront them on the spot; 'it seemed to him better to keep an unseen eye over his son: Sir Austin's old system prevailed' (p. 63).

For Rousseau, as for Foucault, this power of constant watchfulness, of seeing without being seen, instils in its object a new form of subjection, an internalization of social controls, so that, in Rousseau's phrase, 'the will itself is taken captive' (p. 84). Meredith introduces a note of scepticism, however, suggesting that where the System is in fact the interplay between father and son, neither control nor subjection are so complete as might be desired, and

both sides incur psychological damage. Sir Austin becomes a victim of his own System; in holding rigidly to its principles, he 'lost the tenderness he should have had for his Experiment—the living, burning youth at his elbow' (p. 205). He becomes alienated both from his son and himself, as his mask hardens. His surveillance brings a form of empowerment, but also an experience of paralysis, as he checks his emotions and keeps persistently aloof. Like *Dombey* reduced to staring forlornly up at the windows of Dr Blimber's where his son was 'qualifying to be a man', Sir Austin 'condescend(s) to play the spy upon his son' and discovers to his horror that 'he listened to a language of which he possessed not the key' (p. 61). His son has launched himself into life with 'the Devil on board piloting. If a day had done so much, what would years do? Were prayers and all the watchfulness he had expended, of no avail?' (p. 63). As in Rousseau's attempt to 'gain time', Sir Austin anticipates an equal return on time and effort expended to be expressed in a temporal measure of filial years of obedience. Psychological development, Meredith suggests, refuses to conform to such a temporal calculus.

Richard's childhood is represented primarily through his father's eyes, in keeping with Sir Austin's belief that he is, in essence, a 'product' of a System. He emerges into individuality only at points of rebellion. Critics have commented that the content of his education is left singularly vague, but this is precisely the point: his education, like that of *Émile*, is of a negative form, keeping him free from corruption and taint as long as possible.<sup>21</sup> It is clear that Sir Austin does not entirely subscribe to Rousseau's view that 'reading is the curse of childhood' (p. 80), since a curate is employed to give Richard lessons, but this seems a very minor part of his life (and clearly his designated 'tutor' Adrian Harley does not fulfil the usual functions of a tutor). Richard, like *Émile*, is to be educated at home, away from the corrupting influences of other children and a school environment. As in Rousseau's work, the primary corruption to be feared was the too early expression of sexuality.

Rousseau completed *Émile* in 1760, the same year in which Tissot published his treatise on the dangers of masturbation. Rousseau's text is replete with a terror of the controlling power of this 'solitary vice'. He advises parents and tutors to watch carefully: 'Never leave him night or day, or at least share his room; never let him go to bed till he is sleepy, and let him rise as soon as he awakes.' If once he learns to 'abuse his senses . . . he is ruined. From that time forward, body and soul will be enervated; he will

carry to the grave the sad effects of this habit' (pp. 298–9). Whilst the effects of this obsessive desire to control childhood sexuality are evident in English culture from the eighteenth century, it reached near hysterical proportions in the late 1840s and 1850s with the translation of Lallemand's treatise on spermatorrhoea, a supposed disease arising from masturbation, which could end in impotence, madness, and even death.<sup>22</sup> In an industrial culture governed by moral, economic, and psychological ideologies of self-control and the efficient channelling of energy, masturbation, that wasteful and hidden practice, came to seem the ultimate sin of childhood.

Meredith was thus writing in a culture suffused with concern about the dangers of child sexuality. As Spånberg has pointed out, Acton had published two years earlier *The Functions and Disorders of the Reproductive Organs*, which emphasized the dangers of masturbation for children.<sup>23</sup> One can trace, however, a popular medical literature in England preoccupied with these issues from an earlier date. Ripton's 'Adventures of Miss Random' was not the only form of questionable literature available. Newspapers from the late 1840s carried incessant advertisements for works with titles such as 'Self-Control', 'Manhood; the Causes of its Premature Decline', 'The Secret Companion', and 'The Silent Friend'.<sup>24</sup> There was a hierarchy of texts, from these popular tracts which claimed to sell in the hundreds of thousands to more serious medical works such as Acton's and public debates in *The Times*. All focused, however, with varying degrees of hysteria, on the dangers of masturbation and its long-term effects on the health of the nation. These debates were in turn interlocked with new concerns with questions of heredity and breeding, and the possibilities of degeneration: masturbation, it was argued, could lead to impotence or idiot children.<sup>25</sup>

Sir Austin, with his obsession with perpetuating a healthy Feverel dynasty, and his refusal to send Richard to school, clearly shares these contemporary concerns. He had cast his almost saintly nephew Austin out of favour for contracting an unfortunate marriage: he had 'madly disinherited his future' so would thus be 'barren to posterity, while knaves are propagating' (p. 33). The unforgivable sin was not so much the sexual slip as the failure to honour his class position by passing his 'excellent qualities' on to a future generation (behind this judgement we see those freely breeding lower-class hordes who so preoccupied the Victorian upper-class imagination). Sir Austin views schools as 'corrupt' (p. 40). Acton had drawn attention to the dangers of public schools in providing a climate in which masturbation could flourish (in the fourth, 1865, edition he prints a letter which claims that all boys under 10 in

public schools indulge in this practice).<sup>26</sup> By keeping Richard at home, Sir Austin aims to keep him free of any knowledge of such practices; he cannot, however, trust to his System entirely, but requires external corroboration of its success. It is significant that the first time we see Richard, ‘the Hope of Raynham’, as an individual, is when he erupts into rebellion on his seventh birthday when his father has ordered that he strip for a medical examination. Clearly it is not merely his chest that is being examined (popular tracts outlined the signs to look out for of masturbation, which included the shrinking of the penis).<sup>27</sup>

The sexual resonances of Richard’s examination are reinforced by the Shandyesque ribald humour of the celebratory cricket match, which the Doctor’s arrival disrupts. In a conflation of Tristram’s truncation by the window sash and the mystery of Uncle Toby’s wound, at the very moment Richard is being examined, his Uncle Algernon, who has been positioning himself at the wicket ‘to attain the extreme salient posture of his manly person in the eyes of the ladies’, takes a ball ‘on the forward thigh’. He too is examined by the doctor, but that night loses his leg (p. 29). In Sir Austin’s confused and superstitious eyes, Algernon has sacrificed himself so that the ‘curse’ of the Feverels is deflected from Richard; his symbolic castration works to guarantee Richard’s purity of development.

As in the sensation fiction of the 1860s, where sexuality, insanity, and a hereditary taint of the blood are so often intermixed, Meredith comically transforms the Arthurian quest of the Feverel knights errant into a drama of heredity, where the ‘ordeal’ of the Feverels is somehow to overcome or circumvent their own sexuality, which has laid a curse on previous generations.<sup>28</sup> Sir Austin’s attempt to author his own son, and thus erase the female element, is comically undermined, however, by the visit of Richard’s mother during the night which the credulous Sir Austin had taken to be a further manifestation of the Feverel curse: the female figure, he believed, was a ghost, or Mrs Malediction. This ‘Man of Science’, Meredith suggests, is willing to live his life by fairy tales; his careful seclusion of Richard, in order to combat the Feverel curse, is a male version of Sleeping Beauty. Yet, as the recurring ‘ghostly’ presence of the mother suggests, Richard cannot deny his own inheritance: he is destined to wake to sexuality. Meredith playfully moves across genres in this comic epic of child development, interweaving literary, mythic, and scientific texts; in this example, fairy tale is used to puncture scientific pretension, whilst also offering a prediction of future behaviour which accords with the science of the time.

Meredith's structure of presentation mirrors Sir Austin's programmatic schema; from Richard at 7 we shift directly forward to that crucial entry into puberty as Richard nears 14 'and the young Experiment began to grow exceedingly restless' (p. 36). Sir Austin is once more alarmed; not by the regression in Richard's studies, or his destruction of property, but by the discovery that he owned a copy of Lemprière's *Classical Dictionary*, a text singled out by William Acton as a source of 'filthy stories' that would encourage sexual precocity in otherwise 'fine specimens of true Saxon blood'.<sup>29</sup> To Sir Austin, as to Acton, it 'looked like precocity. . . . Supposing the boy to be precocious, the whole system was disorganised' (p. 36). Unlike his system, Sir Austin's fear is adequately grounded. Richard's development runs ahead of Sir Austin's carefully charted plan which (like that of Rousseau), seeks to extend 'Simple Boyhood' well into puberty and to include a whole range of further phases before manhood can finally be reached (in Meredith's parodic terms, 'the Blossoming Season, The Magnetic Age', and 'The Period of Probation') (p. 36). Dr Clifford recommends, as a remedy for precocity, a companion for Richard: "'Some one to rub his excessive vitality against, you mean?" asked the Baronet' (p. 36). Given the context, it seems possible that Sir Austin is made the unwitting vehicle of a sexual joke on Meredith's part (one that he no doubt presumed his female readers would not notice or comprehend).<sup>30</sup> Whether Meredith intended quite that level of suggestiveness or not, the tenor of Sir Austin's ensuing conversation with Dr Clifford is in keeping with the energy dynamics of mid-Victorian sexual discourse: schools are to be avoided, and marriage delayed, but ultimately embraced to avoid the dangers of an even worse fate. Meredith spares the reader the precise details of Sir Austin's 'scientific particulars' but no doubt they covered the usual ground, to be found in Tissot and Rousseau, and more emphatically in mid-nineteenth-century texts, of strength gained from continence, the careful husbanding of resources, which were then to be carefully spent in legitimate procreation, set against their obverse, the wearing away of vitality and life itself in solitary unproductive vice.

Richard's entry into puberty is marked by a rebellion occasioned, once again, by Sir Austin's demand that he submit to a medical examination. His refusal is greeted by Sir Austin with mystification and alarm, 'A boy who has no voice but mine, Doctor. . . .' Whence did this rebellion proceed? Why is he not, like Adam and Eve before the Fall, in a state of 'beautiful shamelessness' (p. 39)? Sir Austin's self-identification with God is so profound, he



is bewildered by any evidence of thoughts or desires not implanted by himself. Rousseau had counselled that such awareness could be staved off until puberty, but then, at 'the first signs of confusion and shame . . . there is not a moment to lose' (p. 284). Richard's response to the request is a 'frenzy of shamefacedness' and a rankling sense of 'the shame of the insult' (pp. 38, 41). In later editions Meredith added the detail that he had been asked 'to submit to medical examination like a boor enlisting for a soldier', which identifies the insult as one of class, but also heightens the sexual dimension.<sup>31</sup>

Rousseau suggests that the onset of 'shame' can be offset by encouraging hunting, which 'serves to delay a more dangerous passion' (p. 285). In the chapter archly entitled 'Showing How the Fates Selected the Fourteenth Birthday to Try the Strength of the System', Richard decides to absent himself from his birthday celebrations and to go hunting with Ripton instead. Their encounter with Farmer Blaize, and the beating they receive, is described in terms which recall the sexual dimensions of the Fall and reinforce the earlier humiliation Richard had felt at being asked to strip: 'It was like a relentless serpent coiling, and biting, and stinging their young veins to madness' (p. 48). Richard's sense of degradation seems extreme, he feels 'shame, self-loathing, universal hatred, impotent vengeance' (pp. 48–9), yet his sense of physical outrage is clearly endorsed by the narrator, who announces 'Richard's blood was poisoned' (p. 49). The language is that of the manuals warning of the dangers of masturbation. Indeed, Acton cites Rousseau's admission in *Confessions* that childhood flogging had induced a lifetime practice of masturbation in order to call for a ban on '*floggings on the nates*'. The effects, Acton argues, are 'reflex and physical. That it has such an effect on the nervous system which supplies the generative organs, there is unfortunately abundant evidence.'<sup>32</sup> While Meredith is not suggesting anything so overtly crude, the associative resonances are there. The order to strip, together with the physical 'defilement' of the beating, have pushed Richard out of childhood into a new phase of his life. Rousseau, in parallel, also traced the end of his childhood to a second beating, which aroused his violent, life-long fury at injustice: 'There ended the serenity of my childish life. From that moment on I have never again enjoyed pure happiness.'<sup>33</sup>

His passions aroused, Richard vents them, if at one stage removed, on the symbolic burning of Farmer Blaize's hayricks, an act which Meredith playfully associates, through intertextual references to Hawthorne, with his subsequent transgression of adultery, when the enchantress Bella literally goes on fire. In a clear invocation of *The Scarlet Letter*, the distraught Ripton

is teased by his sister, who drops a large embroidered letter A into his lap: whilst she believes it symbolizes Amor, for Ripton it spells out Arson; for the reader, however, aware of the associations with the Hawthorne text, it also suggests adultery. An associative chain is thus constructed between Richard's first lapse into passion and his adult fall from grace.

Where Richard's youthful passions are allowed an outlet in the firing of the hayricks, those of his cousin Clare, by contrast, are driven inward, in a form of self-consuming fire. Sir Austin is not the only figure who spies on Richard the night of the rick-burning. Clare had been waiting to offer him a birthday kiss, and now like Sir Austin prowls the corridors. The moment that the rick goes up in flames, Clare falls senseless in the passageway. Meredith teases the reader with servants' accounts of how Clare has seen the ghost of a lady with a bloody handkerchief at her breast, and now lies dangerously ill, before revealing that the ghost, as before, was that fallen woman, Richard's mother. Clare's illness is linked to Uncle Algernon's earlier loss of a leg, and to that other 'sacrifice', a mother's 'heart-broken abnegation' of her child (p. 104).

In creating this explicit contrast between the out-flaring of Richard's passions and the self-consuming nature of Clare's love, Meredith reminds the reader that both these children are being reared according to a System. Mrs Doria's system is less overt than her brother's but is no less powerful in its effects. Clare is being reared by her mother to worship Richard as an idol, in hopes of an eventual marriage. Mrs Doria invites herself to Raynham 'to watch the System, and sap it'. Although she tenderly pities her brother, 'she deemed the System Nonsense: its interdict against the espousals of cousins, Nonsense: all experiments in education, Nonsense' (p. 31). Whilst Mrs Doria does not go to the extent of Mrs Grandison in bringing up her children according to a plan, her actions are a symptomatic expression of the form of education routinely imposed on upper-class girls: systematic self-repression, in preparation for marriage.

Mrs Doria's plan, however, is destined to fail. In drawing attention to Sir Austin's interdiction on marriages of cousins, Meredith is responding to emerging contemporary concerns. The major debates on cousin marriages took place in the 1860s, but Samuel Gridley Howe, in his study of the causes of idiocy in Massachusetts, had cited interbreeding, together with masturbation and intemperance, as a crucial cause.<sup>34</sup> Clare is to be sacrificed on the one hand to her mother's ambitions, and on the other to her uncle's obsession with purity of breeding, which dictates that she, as a cousin, cannot be countenanced as a marriage partner.<sup>35</sup>

In Meredith's terminology, 'Adolescence came on' for Richard and Clare, and Clare 'felt what it was to be of an opposite sex to him. She too was growing, but nobody cared how she grew' (p. 107). Whilst System and text lavish overwhelming attention on the minute details of Richard's passage into 'the Blossoming Season' and 'Magnetic Age', Clare's troubled emergence into sexuality is consistently marginalized until she reaches what Sir Austin designates the 'Peculiar Period', clearly an alternate term for the 'Awkward Age'. At age 17 she is deemed 'marriageable' and thus a threat to the Hope of Raynham. Clare's problematic status is highlighted in the exchange between her mother and Sir Austin: for Mrs Doria she is still a child, whilst for Sir Austin she has suddenly become a woman: 'The Baronet thought it a natural proposition that Clare should be a bride, or a schoolgirl' (p. 116). Although medical textbooks of the period paid far more attention to the effects of puberty on the female body than on the male, Sir Austin's stance attests to the difficulties experienced within the Victorian social domain of contemplating a period of emerging female sexuality. As Lady Blandish sadly remarks, 'The day my frock was lengthened to a gown I stood at the altar. I am not the only girl that has been made a woman in a day' (pp. 119–20).<sup>36</sup> Clare's fate is not to be married directly from the schoolroom but to be hastily banished to an 'Asylum', a term Sir Austin quickly replaces with the more appealing 'select superior Seminary' (p. 116). The associations with asylums for the insane have been created, however, foreshadowing Clare's later decline, when self-repression, and the turning inward of her desires, will lead to her death.

Whilst Clare is systematically ignored and then exiled, every detail of Richard's growth, like that of *Émile*, is subject to minute scrutiny. Sir Austin initially rejoices in the signs of Richard's entrance into puberty, his blushes and abstraction and solitary vigils, taking them as evidence, as he tells Dr Clifford, that 'The blood is healthy, the mind virtuous: neither instigates the other to evil, and both are perfecting toward the flower of manhood' (p. 111). Rousseau had warned of the dangers of young men acquiring knowledge from servants (p. 283), Sir Austin accordingly issues the draconian order that there should be no 'gadding about in couples . . . no kissing in public' on his estate (p. 115), for Richard was now entering the 'Magnetic Age', 'the Age of violent attractions; when to hear mention of Love is dangerous, and to see it a communication of the disease' (p. 114). Meredith mocks the spurious scientism of Sir Austin, with his jumbled imagery of physics and pathology underpinning a terror of natural development, by making him the unwitting

agent of Richard's downfall. Rousseau had argued that male children should not be taught to kiss ladies' hands; Richard witnesses the 'courtly pantomime' of Sir Austin kissing Lady Blandish's hand and stands 'aghast'.

That night he tosses in his bed 'with his heart in a rapid canter, and his brain bestriding it, traversing the rich untasted world, and the great Realm of Mystery, from which he was now restrained no longer'. He has been given the key to 'the gates of the Bonnet' (p. 123). The description of Richard's entry into the first glimmerings of sexual understanding is both comic and affectionate. Reared in such seclusion and ignorance, the merest spark has been sufficient to set his imagination alight, but his fantasies remain courtly, and, Meredith hints, touchingly misplaced. The comic reductionism of male-female desire to the mystery of the 'Bonnet' pokes fun at Victorian social mores (a respectable woman would always cover her hair when venturing outside) whilst quietly suggesting the levels of sexual displacement at work. (Eliot would draw on the same symbolism in *The Mill on the Floss*, the following year, but to rather different effect.)

Although Meredith gently mocks Sir Austin for his mechanistic notion of the energy dynamics of the sexual body, the text seems to support such a model. Sir Austin, we are informed, had shut the 'safety valve' of writing poetry which would have allowed the youth's nonsense to 'have poured harmlessly out' (p. 123). Rousseau had counselled against allowing access to poetry (p. 132) and in the *Ordeal* Richard's poetry writing takes on, for his father, all the resonances of masturbation, a secretive act suggesting an unhealthy indulgence in 'precocious' fantasies. Once again Sir Austin calls on expert opinion, in this case a Professor of Poetry and a phrenologist, to reassure himself of his son's lack of talent in this undignified pursuit. The scientific examination and verdict is the most intrusive, recalling Richard's humiliation at being called to strip for the doctor. A strange man had 'traversed and bisected his skull with sagacious stiff fingers, and crushed his soul while, in an infallible voice, declaring him the animal he was' (p. 113). Meredith was writing at a time when phrenology, which had gained firm acceptance in some scientific circles, was on the wane scientifically, but the popular practice of bringing in a phrenologist to examine one's child was still very much pursued (Queen Victoria had had her own children examined).<sup>37</sup> Phrenology was a materialist doctrine which sought to locate character in the brain; a reading of the skull would disclose the propensities to be developed and those which should be restrained. For Meredith it offers one more instance of the ways in which Sir Austin seeks

to dominate and control the mind of his child; the examination leads to the 'withering' of Richard's 'blossoms' and the ritual burning of the evidence of his secret life, as he is forced to toss all his poetry into the flames. Such 'abhorrent despotism' leads to an end of 'all true confidence between Father and Son' (pp. 113–14). It also, Meredith suggests, shuts the 'safety-valve' regulating Richard's sexual energy, ensuring his speedy entry into sexual engagement.

Whilst his father rushes off guiltily to London to find an appropriate bride, since 'not an hour must be lost in betrothing Richard' (p. 124) (a phraseology which recalls Rousseau's observation that 'there is not a moment to lose' once the boy shows signs of sexual consciousness), the Hope of Raynham is busy 'pulling' on the river to relieve his fever. He is hailed by Ralph Morton, who drags the 'Magnetic Youth from his water-dreams' (p. 125). The reticence employed in depicting Clare's movement into sexuality contrasts dramatically with the lush, overt language deployed with reference to Richard, which clearly skirts the boundaries of decency. (Wet-dream, Acton noted, was another name for Spermatorrhoea.)<sup>38</sup> Meredith changes the first term, but the meaning was clear for all who wished to understand. Richard is awash with sexuality, the very embodiment of the pulsating sexual energies of adolescence which so fascinated, and alarmed, the Victorians. Although Meredith offers a tale of romantic love between Richard and Lucy, he makes clear its origins are far from spiritual: 'When Nature has made us ripe for Love, it seldom occurs that the Fates are behindhand in furnishing a Temple for the flame' (p. 127). Lucy, found on the riverbank with lips stained from eating dewberries, is indeed that Temple. Meredith draws explicitly on *The Tempest* to depict the meeting of this Ferdinand and Miranda, or new Adam and Eve, but also, in a subsequent chapter, on the lush sensuality of Keats: they sit 'like darkling nightingales' whilst the shepherd boy is instructed, 'Pipe, happy Love! pipe on to these dear innocents!' (pp. 167, 168). Unlike the lovers on the Grecian Urn, however, Richard and Lucy cannot be suspended in time, but must confront what Meredith elsewhere designates 'unforgiving Hebrew Time' (p. 276), and the pressures of Sir Austin's rule.

Meredith undercuts Sir Austin's System by endorsing it. Richard experiences such bliss as 'an innocent youth alone has powers of soul in him to experience' (p. 130). Sir Austin has succeeded in creating an innocent youth, a specimen of perfection, but is afraid to trust to nature. Like Rousseau, who masterminded *Émile's* relations with Sophie, finding her and controlling all

the couple's interactions, Sir Austin attempts to create a child of nature whilst exhibiting no faith in natural processes. Whilst the Scientific humanist is stalking the drawing rooms of London, asking 'the most abominable things' of mothers in an attempt to find a perfect mate for his son, Richard is engaging in an idyllic riverbank courtship: 'They were looking out for the same thing; only one employed Science, the other Instinct' (p. 161). In Meredith's text, adolescent instinct is transposed from the lowest swathe of uncontrollable human impulses into the gateway of highest spirituality. The tragic machinery of the novel depends on accepting the premiss that the 'magnetic attraction' of adolescent sexuality is indeed a true foundation for enduring love. Whilst Rousseau's Sophie later falls from grace, Lucy's perfections and true innocence only emerge more strongly from the trials she endures.

With all his arrogance, obsession with breeding, and will to control, Sir Austin becomes a semi-comic and pitiful figure. The 'Unmasking of Master Ripton', where he is found to be concealing 'The Adventures of Miss Random' behind a Manual of Heraldry, highlights the fact that eminently respectable concerns with blood and breeding are themselves fuelled by a desire to control sexuality. Sir Austin's subsequent overblown perorations to Mr Thompson on sexual degeneration—'When the sins of the fathers are multiplied by the sons, is not Perdition the final sum of things?'—is comically undercut by their mutual misunderstanding, where Sir Austin is speaking of human degeneration, and Mr Thompson of wine (p. 151). Yet Sir Austin is proved right to some degree: his investigations in London reveal that sexual excesses on the part of aristocratic parents have bred imbecile sons and consumptive daughters. Contemplating the 'headless, degenerate, weedy, issue' of one of his contemporaries who is about to be married, Sir Austin reflects that if he were not a coward 'I should stand forth and forbid the banns!' (p. 156). This is not another piece of hyperbolic excess on Sir Austin's part, but an immediate reflection of recent debates.

In his article on 'Hereditary Influence' in the *Westminster Review* (1856), G. H. Lewes had considered four recent fictional texts which had all proposed that individuals should not marry if there were evidence of hereditary taint in the family.<sup>39</sup> Whilst his own review of the evidence for the transmission of traits had suggested that inheritance was too complex an issue to be treated in such an absolute fashion, he was a moderate voice amidst the more strident calls for controls on breeding which would culminate in the degenerationist debates and emergence of eugenics in the last decades of the century. The implied parallels between animal and

human breeding, which Darwin was to exploit so successfully in his *Origin of Species* without ever making them overt, were already current in contemporary discourse. Sir Austin thus draws freely on the language of the stock-breeder, demanding of the Doctor, 'if you had a pure-blood Arab barb, would you cross him with a hack?' (p. 157). Whilst mocking Sir Austin's excesses as he interrogates London matrons about 'abominable things' (presumably questions linking to masturbation, venereal disease, and insanity), Meredith nonetheless endorses his general orientation. Richard is healthier in mind and body than his London counterparts. Sir Austin's problem is that he cannot follow his own system. The middle classes, he had earlier argued, were 'frequently more careful—more pure-blooded—than our aristocracy' and thus he would happily marry his son to a penniless girl, if she had been educated on the model of his son (p. 121). He is, however, too wedded to his System, and thus too easily deceived by Mrs Caroline Grandison, who appears to educate her daughters on a Scientific system which is a perfect match to his own (whilst all the while ruining their constitutions by overdosing with an array of medicines). Dazzled by a fellow systemizer, he refuses to see Lucy, a true embodiment of natural perfection, and thus sets in train the tragic events of the novel.

Richard's 'ordeal' is not, as his father believes, that of coping with the hereditary 'curse' of the Feverels in relation to women, but rather that of attempting to emancipate himself from his father and his fatal System. It is clearly an issue of nurture rather than nature, and in tracing Richard's movement into adulthood, Meredith brutally exposes the failings in Sir Austin's educational system. Even in times of crisis Sir Austin sticks rigidly to his System. On hearing of Lucy he summons Richard to London under false pretence of illness and follows a script straight out of Rousseau, who advised embracing the pupil or son, and speaking of all one had done for him, before launching into an emotional speech designed to play upon the pupil's sense of affection and gratitude:

I will press him to my bosom, and weep over him in my emotion; I will say to him: 'You are my wealth, my child, my handiwork; my happiness is bound up in yours; if you frustrate my hopes you rob me of twenty years of my life, and you bring my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave.' This is the way to gain a hearing and to impress what is said upon the heart and memory of the young man. (p. 288)

Sir Austin similarly embraces Richard—'hard upon an Englishman at any time—doubly so to one so shamefaced at emotion in cold blood'

(p. 190)—before expatiating on all he has done for him, isolating himself from the world and devoting himself entirely to his welfare, and ending with an emotional plea for his gratitude:

If you care for my love, or love me in return, aid me with all your energies to keep you what I have made you, and guard you from the snares besetting you. . . . I am bound up in your welfare: what you do affects me vitally. You will take no step that is not intimate with my happiness, or my misery. (p. 194)

Sir Austin initially succeeds: 'So far it was well. Richard loved his father, and even in his frenzied state he could not without emotion hear him thus speak.' But, Sir Austin unfortunately exceeds his instructions; he cannot resist adding in a few jocose remarks about the 'Foolish Young Fellow' until Richard's flow of generous feeling abruptly ceases and 'the Foolish Young Fellow felt his skin tingle and was half suffocated with shame and rage' (p. 194).

The scene is a brilliant exploration of inter-generational miscommunication. Even at times of heightened emotion Sir Austin cannot abandon his System; his appeal is both heart-felt and entirely calculated. Richard, as Rousseau suggests, can be played upon by calls on his feelings of affection and gratitude, but the first hint of ridicule, with its associations of public exposure, acts like another form of beating, or medical examination, recapitulating his earlier torments of rage and shame. True confidence, briefly summoned into life, is lost for ever. Rousseau recommended that this emotional scene should be followed by showing the young man the 'physical and moral evils which overtake' those who neglect purity and giving him 'a true and terrible picture of the horrors of debauch' (p. 289). Sir Austin accordingly retains Richard in London for three weeks, listening to men of science, and being 'dragged about at night-time to see the sons and daughters of darkness' (p. 197).

Meredith, like his alter ego Sir Austin, is in some respects conducting his own experiment, exploring through fiction the potential impact of Rousseau's educational advice. In tracing Richard's development he sets the forces of natural passion against the controlling psychological structures instilled by a lifetime of submission to the System. The System, Meredith suggests, denatures both Father and Son. When Richard, escaping his father's control and yet another ill-fated birthday celebration, collapses from 'excitement of blood and brain' in desperate pursuit of the banished Lucy, the 'Scientific Humanist' is not remorseful: 'Not he. He had looked forward to such a crisis as that point in the disease his son was the victim of,



when the body would fail and give the spirit calm to conquer the malady, knowing very well that the seeds of the evil were not of the spirit' (p. 221). Rousseau had advised that when the 'critical moment is at hand' and 'Nature's due time comes' the father or mentor should not be alarmed since 'the chains you have bound about his heart' will conquer any 'passing transport': 'the sentiment which attaches him to you is the only lasting sentiment, all the rest are fleeting and self-effacing. Do not let him become corrupt and he will always be docile' (p. 281). Rousseau's advice is a chilling prescription for how to retain pupils or offspring in a state of suspended childhood. The supposed interests of the child are secondary to the overweening desire of the parent for control, which is to last a lifetime.

Lady Blandish, who is a true romantic at heart, is saddened by Richard's new docility, which seems to prove that the Baronet's calculations are correct, and that, in a telling rewriting of Genesis, 'Love was a thing of the dust that could be trodden out under the heel of Science' (p. 223). Although, by happy accident, Richard manages to throw off his father's influence sufficiently long to marry Lucy, their romantic idyll is soon disrupted by Sir Austin. Lingered alone in London at his father's behest (which follows Rousseau's model of ordering a lengthy separation between *Émile* and *Sophie* before any union could be permitted), Richard quickly falls victim to the temptress Bella. For all his perusal of dubious reading material, it is Ripton who proves, in the end, to be the purer of the two men—the most faithful to Lucy, and most immune to temptation.

Although seemingly relatively benign during childhood, the pernicious effects of Sir Austin's system of rearing are exposed once Richard enters the domain of sexuality and becomes a danger not only to himself but to those around him. Lucy is not the only woman made to suffer. Clare, the first to be banished, is encountered again in London being forced to drink the unpleasant waters of a well in order to bring iron into her constitution. The scene, and its fateful timing just as Richard is on his way to be married, is a comic debunking of contemporary attempts to medicalize the problems of female adolescence, with young girls being dragged across the country to medicinal spas, when what was required, Meredith suggests, was a modicum of sensitivity to the awakening of their sexual desires. It is not iron Clare wants, but Richard.

The combined efforts of her uncle and mother have destroyed Clare's vitality and will to live. Although the greatest opprobrium is reserved for that supreme egotist and systemizer, Sir Austin, Meredith makes plain that

Mrs Doria, in her rearing of Clare to worship Richard, has achieved an equivalent systematic destruction of her child. Behind the sardonic humour of the *Ordeal* lies the persistent, saddened query: how can parents who love their children yet so contrive to torture them? Mrs Doria, perceiving with 'alarm and anguish' that Clare has 'fallen into the pit she had been digging for her so laboriously', decides Clare must have a husband, and 'as she forced the iron down Clare's throat, so she forced the husband' (p. 356). The 'practical animal' who arranges her puppets at the wedding becomes as culpable as the arch-experimenter, Sir Austin. Richard attempts to play the chivalric knight of his youthful fantasies, rescuing Clare from her fate, but sounds, in his attempts to dissuade her, alarmingly like his father. He has clearly imbibed the Feverel obsession with good breeding: "'That one of my blood should be so debased!" he cried' (p. 359). His concern seems to lie less with Clare's happiness and more with the fact that in marrying an 'old man' she is committing a sin against the Feverel bloodline.

Clare's alarming passivity mirrors that of Richard when he was first separated from Lucy. Where his form of rebellion, however, is that of a flaring out of energy, whether in the firing of the ricks or his elopement, Clare turns her energy inward, against herself. Her fainting, on the night of the rick burning, presages her ultimate act of self-suppression. Richard's careless words, 'if I had done such a thing I would not live an hour after it' (p. 359), lead directly to her suicide. Where other writers might have Clare mysteriously fade away, due to a presumed broken heart, Meredith makes clear that Clare has effectively killed herself. After reading her diary, Richard and her mother 'held a dark unspoken secret in common. They prayed God to forgive her' (p. 446). The phrase is formulaic, but in a Meredith text it takes on disturbing meanings. There is no God in this realm, no supervision from on high apart from the mocking Fates, no promise of an alternate world to which Clare, like Paul, might happily escape. Nor is it Clare who should be forgiven, but Mrs Doria and Richard himself, who have joined the ranks of implicit murderers. Like Paul Dombey, Clare has been pressed out of life, but there are no tear-jerking scenes of sunlight and sea and hopes of transcendence. Her self-murder is both her most courageous act and her ultimate capitulation.

Clare's diary is as revealing in what it does not say as in its confessions. Again, most other writers would have taken the opportunity to reveal the tortured depths of Clare's soul. Meredith, cuttingly, suggests that her self-suppression runs even deeper than that: 'Even to herself Clare was not

over-communicative. The book was slender, yet her nineteen years of existence left half the number of pages white' (p. 445). The 'ordeal' of Richard, subjected to his father's system, pales in significance compared with the sufferings of Clare. Whilst his development was made the centre of all attention, Clare was not only relegated to the sidelines but also taught to give Richard the foremost place in her mind: 'With his name [the diary] began and ended' (p. 445). The tortured symbolism of her request that she be buried with the two wedding rings on her hand reveals her clear-consciousness of the direction of her desires, but the diary does not record a life of fevered longings, rather a constant, dutiful battle with herself to place Richard's interests above her own. Her suicide is an attempt to show him she is not a coward. Where Charlotte Brontë had shown, in *Jane Eyre*, that an oppressed, silent child could yet be seething with rage and desire, Meredith writes to commemorate all those passive girls who hang their heads and dare look no one in the eye. Whilst Jane could write an entire novel, ending with that flourish of self-assertion, 'Reader I married him', Clare cannot fill the pages of her own diary. The girl who remembers laughing 'all day together tumbling in the hay' (p. 445) grows up to see suicide as the only possible course of action.

Meredith explores the depths of self-censorship a culture can create, where even a confessional diary is another form of self-repression. Clare's fantasies of herself and Richard show her difficulties of reconciling herself as child with her adult desires: 'I dreamed last night we were in the fields together, and he walked with his arm round my waist. We were children, but I thought we were married, and I showed him I wore his Ring' (p. 445). They are simultaneously married and still innocent children. Like the Bonnet for the adolescent Richard, the Ring carries multiple symbolic meanings; it is both an image of legitimated desire and an expression of sexual displacement. Where Dickens used childhood to sanctify the union of Florence and Walter, permitting Florence to be both child and woman, Meredith offers no such easy transition for Clare; she is a darker vision of both Paul, the child pressed out of life, and Florence, the neglected daughter. Neither transcendence through death nor fulfilment through marriage is possible.

Meredith has, of course, created the possibility of perfect young love in the courtship of Richard and Lucy, but only to enhance the reader's anger at the utter waste and futility and seeming wilfulness of its destruction. Burdened with the double guilt of his adultery and Clare's death, Richard flees abroad. He is permitted a moment of Romantic transcendence when, having

learnt of the birth of his son, he revels in an apocalyptic storm. The physical action of a young leveret licking his palm brings him to a feeling of purification and natural longing for the child. Lucy has in the meantime met and conquered Sir Austin, who comes to admit 'that Instinct had so far beaten Science' (p. 466). But only so far. Where Dickens would have created a final happy reunion, with partners and generations reconciled, Meredith twists the knife once more. Richard, like his father, is in the grip of a System, where pride, and a misplaced sense of honour, denature his responses. Despite the pull of all his natural instincts and better feelings towards Lucy and his child, he cannot overcome the perversions of his upbringing, and rushes off to fight his ill-fated duel, which effectively causes Lucy's death.

The final chapter of the novel is narrated by Lady Blandish, raging with anger, against Science, the System, and men's blindness. Meredith steps outside of the cynical narrative voice adopted through the text, as if he knows it cannot do justice to the sense of indignation he wishes to incite. Lucy, that embodiment of the natural child who has made an effortless transition into adult sexuality, nonetheless dies a similar death to Clare. As Lady Blandish comments, Lucy's attempts to restrain herself from crying out, and thus disturbing the injured Richard, lead to her brain fever: 'had she not so violently controlled her nature as she did, I believe she might have been saved' (p. 490). The model is once again of suppressed energies overwhelming the interdependent spheres of body and mind.

Meredith draws on contemporary theories of physiological psychology and interlinked energy physics to draw a radical picture of childhood growth and development. In place of the worried imaginings of medical literature and advice texts, he actively celebrates the emergence and expression of sexual energies in adolescence in both his male and female protagonists. Lucy, unlike the downcast Clare, is a sensuous embodiment of innocent sexual energy when we first meet her, but she too is ultimately defeated by the System. Although Meredith takes his model of intertwined mental and physical energies from contemporary science, the actual practice of science, as embodied in the System, provides the ultimate image of manipulative and destructive force.

When he first discovers Richard has a will of his own, and has found a mate without the aid of Science, Sir Austin decides 'it is useless to base any System on a human being' (p. 327). Concern for the System, and its integrity, dwarfs his feelings for his son, whom 'he loved as his life'. Uncharacteristically, the narrator intervenes in moral mode: 'If, instead of saying, Base no system on a

human being, he had said, 'Never experimentalize with one, he would have been nearer the truth of his own case' (p. 328). The abstract theorizing of systematic thinking, Meredith suggests, does not capture adequately the active experimentation Sir Austin indulges in with regard to his son. At first he is figured as a dissector, taking apart the tissues of the brain, but his practice progresses: 'Dead subjects—that is to say, people not on their guard—he could penetrate and dissect. It is by a rare chance, as scientific men well know, that one has an opportunity of examining the structure of the living' (p. 434). Richard evolves away from his status as dead, that is open, subject, as he learns to wear a mask himself, but the encounter with Lucy in a London park figuratively tears open his brain:

Sir Austin could now dissect the living subject. As if a bullet had torn open the young man's skull, and some blast of battle laid his palpitating organization bare, he watched every motion of his brain and his heart; and with the grief and terror of one whose mental habit was ever to pierce to extremes (p. 436).

Sir Austin is at once a heroic surgeon on the field of battle and a ruthless vivisectionist (a suggestion picked up in Lady Blandish's final letter when she notes 'They kill little animals for the sake of Science' (p. 490)). The fact that he suffers as he pushes himself to 'pierce to extremes' does not take away from the fact that his will to power, for knowledge at all costs, overrides his love for the object of his vivisection. From a man who set off to provide his child with an Edenic childhood, Sir Austin has transmuted into a figure who experiences anguished pleasure at the vivisection of his son's brain. Meredith has recast the Rousseauian educational experiment into the terms of contemporary physiological science, where vivisection, following the work of François Magendie and Claude Bernard in France, had now become common practice.<sup>40</sup> All such attempts to create, systematically, the conditions for perfection, or to learn by experimentation, are self-defeating, Meredith suggests, when it comes to human life, since the very energy expended in creating the System leads to the negation of its goals. The scientist's commitment to the system or experiment takes precedence over the interests of the child.

The ending of *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* is startling in its bleakness. Sir Austin has undoubtedly suffered, but it is questionable whether he has learnt from his experience. Dombey might be a broken man at the conclusion of Dickens's novel, but he has finally profited from his experiences, and is morally redeemed; we end with a revived vision of the nurturing potentialities of family life. The way lies open for a new generation, a new Paul

and Florence who will grow within an environment dominated by love. The future for the young Richard is less hopeful. Sir Austin had been won over by Lucy, but her victory was based, significantly, less on her own personal qualities than on her fittingness as mother and producer of the next Hope of Raynham. She can be easily assimilated by the System. Sir Austin is delighted to hear of her attempts to make her son a Historian, whilst he was yet in the womb, and muses that 'It will do us no harm' to have 'some of the honest blood of the soil in our veins' (p. 466). Lucy is merely a conduit for the further historical rise of the dynasty of Feverels. Accordingly, when Lucy, barred from the injured Richard's room, suffers from a complete breakdown of all her faculties, Sir Austin's concern is entirely for his heir: 'He thought her to blame for not *commanding* herself for the sake of her *maternal duties*. He had absolutely an idea of insisting that she should make an effort to suckle the child' (p. 489). Once again System intrudes; Rousseau's eager championing of breast-feeding had become a staple of Victorian childcare manuals. Sir Austin is correct in his science, and utterly, woefully wrong in his human response.<sup>41</sup> He sets breeding, and the development of his bloodline, above human lives. Lady Blandish worries that this man who 'wished to take Providence out of God's hands' would get his hands on the next generation: 'All I pray is that this young child may be saved from him. I cannot bear to see him look on it' (pp. 490–1). The novel ends with Richard, possibly with his mind deranged, and the unthinkable prospect that Sir Austin, far from learning from his mistakes, will set out to repeat his experiments on the next generation.

*Dombey and Son* and *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* both show the impossibility of thinking of childhood outside the structure of family relations. Each highlights the powerlessness of the child in the face of paternal dominance. Yet each also underscores the fact that, in the case of the male child at least, the father is motivated by love. In *Dombey's* case it is a cold sort of love, tied to monetary values which can be replaced, in the end, by Christian family love as he comes to see the error of his ways. For Sir Austin, the problem is less susceptible of resolution. Where Paul's systematic education is grounded in the practices of the industrial economy, Sir Austin reaches back to Rousseau and attempts, laudably enough one might think, to create a new Eden for his child. The results, however, are even more destructive. Meredith mercilessly explores how concern for one's child can become another form of self-aggrandizement. Yet, for all his posturing and 'mad self-deceit', is Sir Austin so very far from the anxious parent who

consumes domestic manuals in the hope of rearing his or her child correctly? The self-referentiality in play in Meredith's creation of Sir Austin and his Pilgrim's Scrip suggest a level of self-flagellation at work that also has wider applications. Is it, indeed, possible to rear a child without imposing some sort of system? *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* offers a comic but deeply disturbing analysis of the effects of parental power, where even an attempt to create a new Eden can become a form of licensed murder.

In its preoccupation with the possibility of a science of child-rearing, the *Ordeal* looks forward to later developments in the century when the science of child study became firmly established. Although sharing with *Dombey and Son* a deep-seated interest in the temporal pacing of childhood, Meredith's text places this interest within a new framework of concerns which were opening up in the late 1850s and 1860s. Heredity and breeding are more prominent in his novel, and the exploration of sexuality, whilst looking back to Rousseau, also partakes of the new preoccupation with sexuality in post-Darwinian psychiatry. Even more than Eliot's *Mill on the Floss*, Meredith's novel brings a new openness into the consideration of the emergence of sexuality in childhood and adolescence.

PART

III

Post-Darwinian  
Childhood: Sexuality  
and Animality



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# 9

## Childhood in Post-Darwinian Psychiatry

Concerns with degeneration, and the possibility that a child could display from its early years evidence of inherited insanity, were already present, as I have shown, in the 1850s. Following the publication of Darwin's *Origin*, however, ideas of inheritance came to play an increasingly large role in psychiatric discourse, whilst the common simile, that a child is like an animal, took on new, literal forms. Maudsley's first major statement on child insanity, a chapter in *The Physiology and Pathology of the Mind* (1867) entitled 'Insanity of Early Life', is one of the first accounts to place childhood mental disorders in an evolutionary perspective. The parallels between the child and animal operate in multiple ways. At one level there is the assumption that the child is on a par with the animal kingdom in its state of mental development. 'Children', he declares, 'like brutes, live in the present; their happiness or misery being dependent upon impressions made upon the senses.'<sup>1</sup> The idea that children live in a world without perspective was to become central to child development studies later in the century, but here Maudsley treats the claim in an entirely negative mode. His vision of the child could not be further removed from Romantic conceptions of childhood innocence or imagination. Drawing implicitly on Coleridge's distinction between imagination and fancy, he maintains that children are incapable of rising to the heights of true imagination: 'the precocious imagination of a child which sometimes delights foolish parents, cannot possibly be anything more than lying fancy'.<sup>2</sup> Contrary to Coleridge's own constructions, 'fancy' is here yoked to that ultimate category of moral disapproval, the lie. Maudsley also goes further in choosing to highlight the problems of childhood fancy with reference to Coleridge's own son, Hartley, offering a damning Victorian verdict on this offspring of

Romanticism: 'Men like Hartley Coleridge cannot possibly have a will, because the reaction of their supreme nervous centre is prematurely expended in the construction of toy-works of the fancy.'<sup>3</sup> To be without a will, in Maudsley's stern moralism, is to be without the central quality which makes us fully human. Hartley, with his 'toy-works', is clearly trapped within a subhuman phase of development.

Maudsley draws extensively on the authority of literary culture in order to paint his jaundiced portrayal of childhood. Dismissing 'that poetic idealism and willing hypocrisy' which talks of the 'purity and innocency of the child's mind', he turns to Milton to support his argument that the child's innocence 'is but a blank virtue, not a pure; her whiteness is but an excremental, adventitious whiteness'.<sup>4</sup> Although Milton was not referring explicitly to a child, but rather virtue that has not been tested, Maudsley gleefully adopts the quotation, no doubt because the obsolete usage of 'excremental' (meaning an 'outgrowth') would carry a Swiftian force for his readers, communicating a sense of disgust. Amongst medical writers, Maudsley turns most frequently to Esquirol, tracing all the various categories of insanity where Esquirol had found child examples. His conclusions, however, are his own. When one encounters insanity in a child, he argues, one sees, as with the adult, 'passion in all its naked deformity':

The instincts, appetites, or passions, call them as we may, manifest themselves in unblushing, extreme, and perverted action; the veil of any control which discipline may have fashioned is rent; the child is as the animal, and reveals its animal nature with as little shamefacedness as the monkey indulges its passions in the face of all the world.<sup>5</sup>

Where Maudsley had suggested earlier that children were at the developmental stage of the 'brute', he now argues that through insanity the child reveals most clearly its animal heritage. Not only does such a child lack shame, it can also, through the operation of 'perverted instinct', take on the characteristics of a monkey both in its behaviour and its form, for 'it sometimes happens that a young child very much resembles a monkey in its conduct, as it does in its wizened old-fashioned face. It may display a wonderful talent for mimicry, a precocious skill in lying with all the ease of an instinct, and a positive faculty for thieving which is quite natural to it.'<sup>6</sup> In his attempt to ally the insane child with the baser aspects of nature, Maudsley is carried away by his rhetoric. Whilst the 'thieving monkey' is

a recognized trope, lying was generally agreed to be a trait which was only acquired with human intelligence.

Insanity in a child was for Maudsley a clear sign of degeneration, whereby the nature of man could by 'retrograde descent . . . pass backwards to a lower stage'. In the morbid, destructive passions of an infant one can trace 'expressions of an advanced degeneration'. Despite his earlier suggestions, he nonetheless maintains that the child can never revert 'to the type of any animal', even to 'man's next of kin' the monkey: 'no possible arrest of development, no degradation, of human nature through generations, will bring him to the special type of the monkey'. Yet his reasons are mixed: on the one hand the insane child will always be the result of a higher nature, but on the other, as a 'morbid' production, it will lack the positive instincts of the animals as well as 'the unconscious upward aspirations of their nature'. The outwardly puzzling 'precocity of seeming vice in the insane infant or child' can be explained by the workings of degeneration, and these morbid specimens can perform the function of an experiment, revealing, through 'the rapid undoing of what has been slowly done through the ages' the 'antecedent steps of [man's] genesis'.<sup>7</sup> Following this formulation, whilst the normal child could, through its stages of development, illuminate the processes of species development, it was through the insane child, with its swift unravelling of the accretions of civilization, that we could best explain our 'essential' nature.

In his orientation, Maudsley anticipates the work of Cesare Lombroso and his English follower, Havelock Ellis, on the relations between the child and the criminal. As Ellis remarked, 'The child is naturally, by his organisation, nearer to the animal, to the savage, to the criminal, than the adult'.<sup>8</sup> Where Lombroso had first seen the criminal as an example of atavism, he came more to the view that the criminal mind manifested arrested development, thus aligning the idea of the criminal mind even more closely with that of the child. Ellis, building on these theories, argued that moral insanity in the child, exhibited through eccentricity, lying, bad sexual habits, and cruelty to animals, was the first stage of 'instinctive criminality'.<sup>9</sup> As for Maudsley, children were closer to the animal or savage state than adults, and the insane child even more so.

Child psychiatry as it emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century was closely interwoven with the various forms of evolutionary science as they too emerged in this period, from biological science through anthropology, psychology, and sociology. Although other writers were less

extreme, and indeed less pessimistic, than Maudsley in their interpretations of childhood mental disorders, the idea of animal or 'savage' inheritance usually hovered at the margins. Through his editorship of the *Journal of Mental Science*, from 1863 to 1878, as well as through his own frequent contributions to the periodical, Maudsley exercised a powerful influence over the development of psychiatry, and over the growing interest in the area of child insanity, which featured in virtually every issue. It is clearly no accident that his later co-editor, T. S. Clouston (1873–9), and immediate successors, George Savage and D. H. Tuke (1878–93) were key figures in the development of child psychiatry. A dissenting voice, which offered a more positive interpretation of child mental disorder, can be found in Charles West, who built on his earlier work to publish in 1871 *On Some Disorders of the Nervous System in Childhood* and a subsequent more popular work designed for the home, *The Mother's Manual of Children's Diseases* (1885). West's interpretative stance was far less abrasive than Maudsley's, offering sympathetic insight into the world of childhood, where the child 'lives in the present, not in the future'. Far from aligning him with 'the brute', however, this lack of perspective means that 'his sympathies are more vivid and his sensibilities more acute'. West suggests that, having less self-consciousness than an adult, the child lives 'as a part of the world by which he is surrounded—a real practical pantheist'.<sup>10</sup>

Where Maudsley drew on Romantic theory to suggest the limitations of childhood, West creates an image of a figure who is the embodiment of the Romantic ideal: deeply sensitive, and yet able to form an ego-free bond with the world around him, as an ultimate expression of pantheism. Building on his work on night terrors, West explores stammering and aphasia, and the ways in which the sheer intensity of a child's emotions, without an adult sense of temporal perspective, can lead literally to a form of death from heartbreak. This suffering child is a world removed from Maudsley's degenerate specimen (although in its Romantic creativity it anticipates the work of Sully and other writers in the later child-studies movement). West concludes by distancing himself from those who claim that a child's ungovernable temper and passions are but evidence of our 'parent stock, from which we are separated by centuries of training, and which the identity of the *hippocampus minor* in man and monkey proves beyond a doubt'. Whilst reluctantly accepting Darwin's theories of the transmutation of species, he nonetheless seeks to replace the 'dreary doctrine' of extermination of the weak with a religious vision of the perfection of each individual,

'a perfection to be attained not here, but higher'.<sup>11</sup> Although West attempts to offer an alternative vision, his need to do so points to the powerful ascendancy already established by the degenerationists' version of child psychiatry.

## Idiots and Wild Children

One key element in these debates was that of idiocy, since the first asylums designed to take the young in England were for 'idiots', and there was real practical and theoretical ambiguity surrounding divisions between idiocy and insanity.<sup>12</sup> For the degenerationists, idiocy and insanity seemed alike the products of a tainted inheritance. In the late forties and fifties, however, the figure of the idiot was one that attracted sympathetic concern and crusading zeal. Samuel Gaskell, the novelist's brother-in-law, wrote a very positive, influential account of the humane treatment of idiots in the Bicêtre in Paris for *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal* (1847), whilst the pioneering work of Dr Guggenbühl in his asylum for cretins in Switzerland, from 1839, led to the creation by the Revd Andrew Reed and John Conolly of Park House in Highgate (1848), and then Essex Hall in Colchester, financed by subscription. In 1855 the first purposely constructed 'Asylum for Idiots' opened at Earlswood in Surrey. Work had also at this time been proceeding in America, with Dickens reporting in glowing terms in *American Notes* (1842) on Samuel Gridley Howe's work at the Perkins Institution and Massachusetts Asylum for the Blind in Boston, particularly the case of the deaf, dumb, and blind girl Laura Bridgman, who had been taught to read.

As these examples suggest, there was a rather disturbing elision at this period between children or adults classified as deaf and dumb and those deemed idiots, both alike outside the domain of language, which would confer humanity. In popular discourse, reforming zeal focused on the possibilities of lifting the inmates from a stage of pre-linguistic animality into full humanity. Thus Dickens cites Howe's account of Laura Bridgman grasping the significance of letters: 'at once her countenance lighted up with a human expression: it was no longer a dog, or parrot: it was an immortal spirit, eagerly seizing upon a new link of union with other spirits!'.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, Gaskell reported how an inmate had entered the Bicêtre with 'all the characteristics of an inferior animal', but had been turned into an excellent carpenter. Gaskell is delighted with the ways in which the forms of

education on offer transform the youthful inmates: 'Having lived several years in a senseless, inactive condition, it is easy to conceive that the change from this state of vacuity to an existence conscious and intelligent, must be accompanied with feelings of peculiar pleasure and novelty.'<sup>14</sup>

The opening of institutions for idiots in England drew similar responses from Dickens, who published a glowing account of Park House in *Household Words*, succinctly entitled 'Idiots', followed by two pieces by Harriet Martineau, 'Deaf Mutes' and 'Idiots Again', where the emphasis is on reclamation, although Martineau, following Howe's report on idiocy, starts and finishes with severe strictures regarding intermarriage of blood relations, which should be 'discountenanc[ed] as a crime'.<sup>15</sup> In Dickens's work more generally one finds a fascination with the figure of the idiot which predates these developments, most particularly in *Barnaby Rudge*, where the eponymous hero, whose own inadequate powers of speech are set against those of his highly articulate raven, is himself an idiot. As Natalie McKnight has shown, Dickens's novels are populated by a variety of forms of idiot.<sup>16</sup> Almost invariably positive, these representations circle constantly around questions of language and humanity—whether a lack of articulacy might confer greater moral or intuitive wisdom or lead to a subhuman form of existence. Harriet Martineau was far less positive in her assessment than Dickens. Deaf mutes, she suggested, might acquire language, but never full understanding, and hence they would lack a moral nature. Although they might write down 'pretty similes' and sentiments, 'in their case there is the sign without the thing signified, and the sentimental phrase without the radical feeling under it'.<sup>17</sup> Martineau's arguments, which carry a particular emotional resonance given her own partial deafness from childhood, look back to the arguments of Aristotle, that those outside language are necessarily brutish, and look forward to the arguments of evolutionary psychiatry, where idiocy or mutism were seen as evidence of descent down the evolutionary ladder.

Henry Maudsley became more emphatic with the years on the subject of degeneration. In *Body and Mind* (1870), he drew on Howe's work on idiocy and that of Morel to trace the downward movement through generations, from immorality and alcoholism in the first to mania and idiocy in the fourth. Insanity in the parent, he suggests, 'may issue in idiocy in the offspring, which is, so to speak, the natural term of mental degeneracy when it goes on unchecked through generations'.<sup>18</sup> He invokes the theories of Darwin, and the principle that the human brain passes through all the stages of the animal, in order to explain idiocy or insanity as arrested

development, 'at or below the level of an orang's brain'.<sup>19</sup> Strong support for Darwin's views, he suggests, could be drawn from morbid psychology, for the degeneration of insanity marks the 'unkinding' of human kind.<sup>20</sup> In the work of J. Langdon Down, who was superintendent of Earlswood in its early years, the idea of degeneration took on specifically racial overtones when he suggested that there was a 'remarkable resemblance of feeble-minded children to the various ethnic types of the human family', particularly that of the Mongols.<sup>21</sup> Although his aim, at the time of the American civil war, was to counteract polygenist theories, and to suggest that all races were part of one human family, its impact was to reinforce ideas of degeneration. Langdon Down did not see idiocy as solely a product of inheritance, however; he too reinforced ideas that it could be developmental, or accidentally acquired through brain damage. Thus he advised that a child whose mother had severe emotional disturbance during pregnancy should abstain completely from intellectual work during the second dentition, in order to avoid developmental idiocy.<sup>22</sup> Whereas physicians writing on the medical problems of infancy had tended to stress the potentially fatal impact of first dentition, Langdon Down singled out three periods of crisis when idiocy or insanity might develop: first and second dentition, and puberty. Although his book *On Some of the Mental Affections of Childhood and Youth* is primarily concerned with forms of idiocy, there is also an extended section on insanity in childhood and youth. He confirms the existence, if infrequent, of infant mania, and of delusions of suspicion amongst children, imagining they were being watched or poisoned, and mania of jealousy, as shown by an 8-year-old girl who was so jealous of her young brother that she placed him on the fire (a 'homicidal mania' which Langdon Down attributes to masked epilepsy).<sup>23</sup>

Langdon Down is particularly interesting on the mental aberrations of puberty—unnatural introspection and hyper-conscientiousness—and offers cases of children in his care between 11 and 13 who had morbid fears of not speaking the truth which led to mental breakdown. One boy was troubled by the fear he might contaminate his mother by thinking of her at the same time as a beggar: 'I saw him greatly perturbed one day from having seen an errand-boy come to the school-house, and his thoughts flitting to his mother he was rendered inexpressibly miserable lest he had lowered, injured, and contaminated her by unwittingly thinking at the same time of her and the dirty boy.'<sup>24</sup> Langdon Down was not Freud, and he offers no analysis of this case. In the boy's attempt to keep separate in his mind



those two poles of the binary opposition, pure mother figure and animalistic lower class, one can trace in microcosm the cultural anxieties of the Victorian middle class.<sup>25</sup> Langdon Down also traces cases of moral insanity in childhood and youth, although he suggests that it is most frequently associated with some mental backwardness. William W. Ireland, who wrote the classic study *On Idiocy and Imbecility* (1877), revised in 1898 as *The Mental Affections of Children: Idiocy, Imbecility and Insanity*, went even further to argue that the want of true moral feeling characterizing this condition actually shows a deficiency in intellect, and hence a better term would be 'moral imbecility'. More generally, he argues that insanity in children uncomplicated with idiocy is very uncommon.<sup>26</sup> He comes close at other times, however, to arguing that childhood is itself almost a state of insanity, for the senses in a child are most acute, and 'pain, disgust, deprivation, are resented with passionate keenness and provoke bursts of wrath or weeping'. If a man had such feelings 'he would be regarded as insane'. Education, therefore, acts to check and regulate ideas and feelings, 'Thus sanity may be regarded as something acquired or something implanted in man'.<sup>27</sup> The child, in this construction, clearly exists outside a state of sanity.

Ireland had lived for some time in India, home of many wolf-child legends, and part of his work addresses the figure of the wild child, which had evoked so much fascination since Peter of Hanover and the Wild Girl of Champagne in the eighteenth century. The former, who was transported to England in 1726, and even lived for a time in St James's Palace, inspired Defoe, Rousseau, and Linnaeus amongst others, whilst the latter lay at the heart of Lord Monboddo's theories of development from ape to human.<sup>28</sup> The discovery of the Wild Boy of Aveyron at the end of the eighteenth century, and of Kaspar Hauser thirty years later, kept alive this intense interest in the figure of the wild child, and with it all the associated speculation concerning language, humanity, and our relations to an animal state.<sup>29</sup> Given the popular fascination with the idea of the 'missing link' post Darwin, it is surprising that the psychiatrists paid so little attention to feral children.<sup>30</sup> Maudsley broaches the issue, only to move on swiftly, having dismissed all recorded cases as those of idiot children cast out by their families.<sup>31</sup> Ireland draws directly on the raft of cases and stories that came to light in India in the second half of the century. He was wary of degeneration theory, however, and his account tends simply to focus on the physical unlikelihood of fierce wolves caring for human children. Instead, he emphasizes the plastic imagination of the Hindustani who is

‘fond of the marvellous’ and not ‘a rigid and strict observer, like educated Europeans living in these scientific and critical times’. They were too ready to give credence to tales of wolf-children, when the mundane reality was probably that idiot children had simply strayed into the woods.<sup>32</sup> Although Ireland refuses to be drawn into speculations on the animal–human link, his chapter forms part of the fascination with the link between the child and the animal state which would give issue to Kipling’s stories of Mowgli, or Dr Robinson’s attempts to hang infants on bars (to be discussed in Chapter 14), experiments which suggest that European science was perhaps equally addicted to ideas of the marvellous.

## Sexuality and Adolescence

The two other elements that feature largely in post-Darwinian discussions of child mental disorders are those of sexuality and the problems of adolescence. In his 1905 essay ‘On Infantile Sexuality’, Freud remarked: ‘So far as I know, not a single author has clearly recognised the regular existence of a sexual instinct in childhood.’ He then cites all the major European and American texts on child development, including Preyer in Germany, Perez in France, Sully in England, and Baldwin in America (in 1910 he notes this generalization is no longer valid for he had just read Stanley Hall’s *Adolescence*). He continues:

I believe, then, that infantile amnesia, which turns everyone’s childhood into something like a prehistoric epoch and conceals from him the beginnings of his own sexual life, is responsible for the fact that in general no importance is attached to childhood in the development of sexual life.<sup>33</sup>

The analogy is drawn from the writers he cites, who regarded childhood as the key to unlocking the story of social evolution. As Sully noted, the child is a ‘monument of his race, and in a manner a key to his history’.<sup>34</sup> Far from challenging the analogy, Freud appropriates it to apply to the ‘prehistory’ of the individual life. Just as the child held, for the race, the secrets of its origins, so too, for the individual, childhood holds, inaccessible to memory, the secrets of adult sexuality. The explanation is seductive, although only if one permits the unspoken elision between infancy and childhood, since it is only the first three years of life that are usually outside of the reach of memory. It is also historically misleading. Freud is undoubtedly correct that

in all those works dedicated to studying in minute detail the developmental processes of childhood, there is virtually no direct reference to sexuality. Thus in Sully's *Studies of Childhood*, the child is linked throughout to primitive cultures and animals, and the infant depicted as 'an incarnation of appetite which knows no restraint', but in the entire 500 pages there is no reference to sexuality.<sup>35</sup> Preyer and Perez similarly depict children as guilty of rage, fury, greed, and utter selfishness, but never lust, although this was the primary passion generally associated with the primitive, to which the children were so repeatedly compared.

From our current standpoint, the omission of sexuality does appear startling, particularly when set alongside the medical literature of the period. Freud, however, only looked at part of the picture. The late nineteenth century saw the development of two interrelated but independent forms of discourse on child development: that emerging from physiology and psychology, and the medical strain which was to produce child psychiatry. Both intersected with theories of evolution, and there were repeated points of crossover between the two fields, but in the end there were fundamental differences between the two, focused most precisely on sexuality. For the psychologists, concerned predominantly with normal patterns of development, sexuality was politely omitted from the picture, despite the overwhelming concerns with masturbation in childhood. The psychiatrists, by contrast, focusing on the abnormal and the pathological, developed an altogether darker picture of childhood, and seemed positively to revel in depictions of child sexuality. Thus Crichton Browne in his 1860 essay informed his readers, as we have seen, that the mind of the child was not as pure and innocent as had been believed but could be 'assailed by the most loathsome of psychical disorders, viz., satyriasis, or nymphomania; the monomania affecting the sexual instinct'. Furthermore, sexual precocity could be observed from a very early age. He offers a range of examples from pregnancy at the age of 9 to children as young as 3 being afflicted with sexual monomania.<sup>36</sup>

Freud acknowledged that there had been cited cases of precocious sexual activity, but only as examples of exceptional events. In the rhetoric of the psychiatrists, however, the fascination with abnormality tends to blur boundaries and to edge ever closer to generalizations about all children. Maudsley was not slow to emphasize the sexual dimensions of childhood. He builds on his suggestion that the child 'reveals its animal nature with as little shamefacedness as the monkey indulges its passions in the face of all

the world' by offering an extended analysis of the role of the 'instinct of propagation' in childhood. To those who might object that the instinct is not manifest until puberty, he insists they are mistaken, for,

there are frequent manifestations of its existence throughout early life, both in animals and in children, without there being any consciousness of the aim or design of the blind impulse. Whosoever avers otherwise must have paid very little attention to the gambols of young animals, and must be strangely or hypocritically oblivious of the events of his own early life.<sup>37</sup>

Far from invoking amnesia, Maudsley accuses all readers who question the existence of child sexuality of hypocrisy. His claim, based on an appeal to everyone's childhood experiences, is of childhood sexuality as a norm. He then invokes various historic cases, including Esquirol's one of a girl who, from the age of 3, practised lewd movements against furniture and grew up to be a nymphomaniac, to show how the basic instinct can be exaggerated in an insane child.<sup>38</sup> Whilst the 'enthusiastic idealist is greatly shocked by disgusting exhibitions of unnatural precocity in children of three or four years of age', the scientific observer sees in them 'valuable instances on which to base his generalizations concerning man, not as an ideal but as a real being'.<sup>39</sup> The abnormal is a reliable guide to the 'real', or normal state.

One also finds, however, discussions of child sexuality in the general medical press which endorse the idea of early development without invoking pathology at all. Thus Braxton Hicks (whose 'Inquiry into Powerless Labours' gave rise to the 'Braxton Hicks' contractions featured in all pregnancy manuals today) argued in the *British Medical Journal* that 'the organs of generation in their healthful state, from the earliest intra-uterine life till the full period of puberty are in a state of progressive development'. Thus the change at puberty is not so marked as has been claimed: 'That sexual feelings exist from earliest infancy is well known, and, therefore, this function does not depend upon puberty, though intensified by it.' To advance his theory of gradual, progressive development, Braxton Hicks turns to what he claims is the commonly accepted position that 'sexual feelings exist from earliest infancy'.<sup>40</sup>

There is perhaps a difference, however, between 'well known' and openly acknowledged. William Acton's much reprinted work, *The Functions and Disorders of the Reproductive Organs, in Childhood, Youth, Adult Age, and Advanced Life*, provides a classic example of this confusion. It opens with the declaration that 'In a state of health, no sexual idea should ever enter a

child's mind', but the ensuing discussion would seem to suggest that children only rarely attain this requisite state of health.<sup>41</sup> The book is a classic of masturbation literature, heavily influenced by Lallemand.<sup>42</sup> Acton battles between his stated belief in childhood innocence and his almost overwhelming sense of their corruption, from which it is the duty of all adults to save them, before they are lost for good. He recommends a regime of intensive surveillance in homes and schools, coupled with mechanical restraint in a 'strait-waistcoat' where necessary.<sup>43</sup>

Acton vacillates wildly in his arguments. At many points all boys are seen to be masturbators, at others only a particular type. He warns that public schools must make sure that they do not concentrate too much on intellectual education:

it is not the strong athletic boy, fond of healthy exercise, who thus early shows marks of sexual desires: but your puny exotic, whose intellectual education has been fostered at the expense of his physical development.

Little do parents know or think of what they sacrifice in unnaturally forcing the intellectual at the expense of muscular development.<sup>44</sup>

Intellectual and sexual precocity are once more aligned as related forms of abnormal development. There is a strong nationalistic bias to Acton's arguments. Not only is the intellectual child a 'puny exotic'; he also speaks of trembling with indignation on seeing 'fine specimens of true Saxon blood' with such filthy books as Lemprière's *Classical Dictionary*, a weakness, as we have seen, displayed by that offspring of ancient English lineage, Richard Feverel.<sup>45</sup> The contradictions in Acton's arguments are legion. Masturbators are puny specimens, not true Anglo-Saxon stock, who are biologically predisposed; or, they are victims of over-education; or, most threateningly, they are simply intelligent. Thus Acton warns that, 'a mere child, with its keen curiosity, and eyes always on the alert for anything new may acquire in a very short time an astonishing amount of information even about sexual matters'.<sup>46</sup> Later, these clever children who draw their own conclusions from watching animals and reading books become 'such peculiarly organized children'. Intelligence is once more aligned with perversion.

Like many writers, Acton was exercised by the problem of child knowledge, particularly whether an adult should run 'the risk of tainting an ingenuous mind' by unfolding the details and dangers of masturbation. Not surprisingly, it was a problem that was fiercely debated, even by such

unlikely figures as Dr Edward B. Pusey, Regius Professor of Hebrew at Oxford University, and one of the leaders of the Oxford Movement. In an extraordinary interchange in *The Times* through November and December of 1866, Dr Pusey defended the practice of confession, particularly for boys who entered into the path of evil at 8 or 12 when they first went to school, but were not aware that they were committing a sin. Parents tended to 'shrink from an imagined risk of conveying hurtful knowledge which Satan has taught long before, not for prevention, but in temptation'.<sup>47</sup> In his increasingly bitter exchanges with 'S.C.O', Pusey becomes more and more explicit on the dangers of the 'besetting trial of our boys' (which had grown up, he claims, in the wake of intercourse with the Continent being renewed), and which was 'sapping the constitutions and injuring in many the fineness of intellect'.<sup>48</sup> Finally he wrote a letter entitled 'On the Protection of the Young from Unknown "Moral Evil"', which *The Times* 'in justice to our readers' declined to print. The editorial comments: 'Dr Pusey seems to be of the opinion that such evils are best encountered by being discussed in public and confessed in private. We believe, on the contrary, that they are best left in their native darkness, and that vice is most effectually overcome when it is most completely forgotten.'<sup>49</sup> The sexual and religious politics of the exchange are complex. Where Pusey holds, with Acton, that masturbation is an imported foreign vice, his interlocutors all see confession (Pusey's suggested cure) as itself part of that dangerous foreign disease of Catholicism which would sap the manhood of England. As *The Times* commented, 'to argue in favour of habitual Confession in the English Church is like arguing in favour of despotism in the English Constitution'.<sup>50</sup> The discourse might be that of political freedom, but at its heart it is focused on child sexuality: the scapegoating of continental influences, or confession itself, merely displaces the unspoken fears that child sexuality is innate.

Although Acton and Dr Pusey concentrated on male masturbation, concerns were not confined to the male sex, as is often assumed, but were also active with reference to girls.<sup>51</sup> Thus Thomas Laycock had argued in *A Treatise on the Nervous Diseases of Women* (1840) that 'young girls cannot associate together in public schools without serious risk of exciting the passions, and of being led to indulge in practices injurious to both body and mind'.<sup>52</sup> Other medical texts warned of girls becoming addicted to 'lesbian pleasures' at school and thus emerging as reluctant brides.<sup>53</sup> In *An Inquiry into a Frequent Cause of Insanity in Young Men* (1861), Robert Ritchie

noted that 'indulgence in this vicious propensity is by no means infrequent among females' but tended to produce hysteria rather than full-blown insanity.<sup>54</sup> Even the sedate Charlotte Yonge felt it incumbent to warn her readers against sending their daughters to school, where there would be 'no guarding against unimaginable evils which a sense of honour forbids the most conscientious to disclose'.<sup>55</sup> Concerns with masturbation seem to continue unabated right through to the end of the century. Thus Gordon Stables, the self-proclaimed 'Father-Confessor to over a million English-speaking boys', did not wait to launch into his first chapter of *The Boy's Own Book of Health and Strength* (1892), but included warnings about 'ill health, induced by habits acquired at public school' in his prefatory address to the reader. He 'confesses' that 'a natural shyness forbids me speaking more plainly, of errors that are sapping the very manhood of this great and glorious nation', although his subsequent disquisitions on 'private vice' need little translation.<sup>56</sup>

Masturbation was not the only cause for concern with reference to child sexuality. The first category of dysfunction Acton explores is that of sexual precocity, as marked by a boy preferring to play with girls: 'His play with the girl is different from his play with his brothers. His kindness to her is a little too ardent.' Parents are amused and pleased with his gentleness and politeness, 'But if they were wise they would rather feel profound anxiety'. Acton suggests that medical intervention is called for: 'he would be an unfaithful or unwise medical friend who did not . . . warn them that the boy, unsuspecting and innocent as he is, should be carefully watched, and removed from every influence that could possibly excite his slumbering tendencies'.<sup>57</sup> Acton has, at a stroke, pathologized a whole swathe of contemporary literature; one thinks of David Copperfield and Little Em'ly, or Tom and Ellie in *The Water-Babies*. All those chaste kisses, so alien to modern readers, become evidence of disturbing early sexuality. According to Acton's own earlier assertion: 'The first and only feeling exhibited between the sexes in the young should be that pure fraternal and sisterly affection, which it is the glory and blessing of our simple English home-life to create and foster with all its softening influences on the after life.'<sup>58</sup> Even such sibling affection is now tainted by association. As novels like *Wuthering Heights* and *The Mill on the Floss* were also suggesting, English home life was far from simple, and fraternal and sisterly affection were complexly interwoven with the development of sexual feelings. *Wuthering Heights* explores the ways in which a childhood sibling bond translates into

sexual passion in adolescence (with only a technical avoidance of incest), whilst the 'one final embrace' which marks the deaths of Maggie and Tom Tulliver records the difficulties both have had in reconciling childhood love with adult sexuality.

Acton accompanied his warnings with refreshingly direct physical details. It should not be forgotten, he observes, 'that in such cases a quasi-sexual power often accompanies sexual inclinations. Few, perhaps, know how early a mere infant may experience erections.'<sup>59</sup> Revealingly, he suggests that mothers and nurses are oblivious to the phenomenon of infant erections in the morning, which are so frequently noted by medical men. His first explanation is that of heredity: 'No man or woman, I believe, can have habitually indulged their own sexual passions to the exclusion of higher and nobler pleasures and employments, without running the risk of finding that a disposition to follow the same course has been inherited by their offspring.'<sup>60</sup> Sexual excess in the parents produces precocity in the child; the physical symptoms of arousal in the infant are given all the emotional and psychological freight of adulthood. Under this interpretation, heredity annuls progression: an infant becomes an expression of an adult past. The turbulent unease fuelling Acton's arguments is symptomatic of that underlying wider debates about childhood. In asking his readers to accept that a child of 3 could be a nymphomaniac, Crichton Browne not only thrust aside ideas of staged progression, but also raised questions about the nature of childhood itself. Was childhood, for the Victorians, less an entity or experience in itself than a gloriously empty space, defined pre-eminently by the fact that it did not partake of the sexual feelings which complicated puberty and adult life? Ideas of childhood innocence gained their hold precisely due to equally powerful, underlying fears that the very reverse might be true.

The anxieties expressed by Acton about the physical qualities of child sexuality find their counterpart in advice literature focusing on appropriate ways to raise children. Thus Charlotte Yonge warned that the age of 4 or 5 to 6 or 7 was the 'age of coquetry' in girls when they welcomed adult male attention. The problem is located both in the nature of the girls themselves and in the social behaviour of their adult admirers. Yonge argues that

there is a certain blighting of the perfect freshness and delicacy of the nature, when the simulation of real love and courtship is permitted. It seems to me to be hard upon the dignity and innocence of childhood, thus to ape what it cannot understand, and to desecrate the real beauty of love to forestall it in sport.



In an anticipation of current ‘just say no’ campaigns, the child is instructed to respond: ‘Mamma does not like that kind of play.’<sup>61</sup> Although there is no suggestion of inappropriate physical contact, Yonge highlights the uneasiness aroused when adult forms of behaviour and expectation are projected onto a child.<sup>62</sup> Her child, however, is both innocent and a coquet, dangerously balanced between the pre-sexual and sexual domains.

Similar elisions occur in fiction. In the opening paragraph of *Sentimental Tommy: The Story of his Boyhood*, J. M. Barrie introduces the 5-year-old Tommy, still clad in ‘sexless garments’ but already unreadable: ‘That inscrutable face, which made the clubmen of his later days uneasy, and even puzzled the ladies while he was making love to them, was already his.’<sup>63</sup> In the conventions of child-development fiction, a first- or third-person adult narrator might comment with hindsight on the actions or emotions of a child, but adult sexuality is rarely superimposed upon the image of the child in this way. Although the goal of the narrative is generally the attainment of adult maturity, and hence sexuality, the method is normally that of incremental shifts and changes, and symbolic anticipations only comprehended in retrospect. Barrie breaks these unspoken rules: as in theories of hereditary transmission, where the child is the expression of an adult past, the ‘inscrutable’ Tommy is simultaneously a sexless child and seductive adult. Whilst that other strange child of 1890s fiction, Father Time in Hardy’s *Jude the Obscure*, embodied the problems of the past, Tommy as a child is an expression of his future. His inscrutability hints at inappropriate knowledge, whether inherited or acquired in early life—he is a product of an abusive marriage, and, in almost Freudian terms, Barrie suggests that he is concealing from himself his memories of his father’s violence to himself and his mother. He is, in that sense, ‘precocious’, a term used repeatedly in representations of the working-class child to indicate the too-early acquisition of knowledge and sexual habits which, for middle-class commentators, then thrust them out of childhood.<sup>64</sup>

The fact that Tommy at the age of 5 was still clad in ‘sexless garments’ highlights one of the intriguing anomalies, for twenty-first-century eyes, of Victorian child-rearing, where the increasing desire to differentiate between the male and female child with reference to behaviour in the early years is nonetheless overturned by the continuing tradition of retaining boys in what are now seen as female garments until they were breeched, which could be anywhere between the ages of 3 and 8. It was a practice that

continued even into the early twentieth century (see Fig. 9.1). Whilst Acton might worry with reference to sexual development about young boys playing with girls, and middle- and upper-class boys were sent away to school at increasingly earlier ages to ‘make men’ of them, the dress codes of the nursery still maintained a regime of sartorial equality, defining the wearer primarily as child rather than gendered being.



Figure 9.1. Henry James Shuttleworth, *c.*1904. Courtesy of Oliver Christie

## Adolescence

Ideas of child sexuality were of course closely intertwined both with notions of insanity, particularly in relation to masturbation, and with constructions of puberty and adolescence. In the work of Maudsley one finds that he passes from claiming that self-abuse is not a particularly powerful cause of insanity in an article in the *Journal of Mental Science*, 1867, to an extreme denunciatory article the following year, which concludes that the sooner this specimen of mental degeneracy 'sinks to his degraded rest the better for himself, and the better for the world which is well rid of him'.<sup>65</sup> It is difficult to disentangle in the article Maudsley's depictions of puberty from the effects of self-abuse which, he suggests, might well then ensue.<sup>66</sup> In language which seems to set the frame for subsequent descriptions of puberty or adolescence itself, he argues that the sufferer becomes 'offensively egotistic' and 'more and more closely wrapped up in his own narrow and morbid feelings, and less and less sensible of the claims of others upon him and of his duties towards them'. He spends his time 'in indolent and solitary self-brooding' and at home is selfish, irritable, and passionate, and 'entirely wanting in reverence' for his parents.<sup>67</sup>

Maudsley's work prepared for that of his successor on the *Journal of Mental Science*, T. S. Clouston, who offered in his 1880 article, 'Puberty and Adolescence Medico-Psychologically Considered', one of the first detailed medical explorations of the psychology of adolescence.<sup>68</sup> As we have seen, puberty and adolescence were not, for Clouston, synonymous: puberty began around about 14, whilst adolescence stretched from 18 to 25. Although puberty and adolescence have become conflated in our own culture, Clouston was employing the classic definition of adolescence, which stretches back to Roman times, and is indeed still the primary meaning offered in the *OED*.<sup>69</sup> The distinction is significant for it suggests the ways in which aspects of childhood, to the Victorian mind, were prolonged well into the twenties. In our focus on the Victorian middle-class quest for early marriage of the daughters, we have perhaps neglected the ways in which they nonetheless considered their offspring who had passed the age of majority at 21 still less than adults.

In our own culture we talk of the prolonged childhood or adolescence now created by extended education; we are in part merely replicating Victorian perceptions. Clouston argued fiercely that full bodily and

reproductive growth was not attained until 25, and hence that breeding before this time was of danger both to the individual and the race: 'A man who propagates his kind before his beard is grown breaks a law of nature, sins against posterity, and leaves the world worse than he found it.'<sup>70</sup> He followed the work of Dr Matthews Duncan on fecundity in arguing that for years after puberty 'boys and girls are still boys and girls in mind' as well as body.<sup>71</sup> The shift between 18 and 25, he argued, was far more decisive than that experienced in puberty. His arguments are based not so much on outward physical changes as on patterns of social and cultural behaviour, most significantly in the exercise of literary taste:

No adolescent ever really appreciated, or even thoroughly liked, Shakespeare. That is reserved for full manhood. . . . The boy enjoys Ballantyne and Marryat; G. P. R. James begins to have a dim meaning to the youth; at puberty the adolescent takes to Scott, Dickens, and Miss Austin [*sic*]; while only the man enjoys and understands Shakespeare, George Eliot and Thackeray.<sup>72</sup>

Reading habits are taken as outward markers of inner physiological changes, which in turn govern psychological development.

The literary and medical intersect once more in Clouston's outline of the behaviour associated with adolescence for he turns not to any medical diagnostic list, but to the work of George Eliot, 'by far the most acute and subtle psychologist of her time', and her representation of Gwendolen Harleth in *Daniel Deronda*.<sup>73</sup> He offers a series of quotations to illustrate Gwendolen's concern with the opposite sex, her egoism, and action from instinct rather than calculation and reason; her want of any definite desire to marry, her selfishness as regards her relations, and her 'organic craving to be admired'. He suggests that it 'seems like passing from the poetry of science to Dryasdust's details, to descend from George Eliot's word-pictures to the details of physiological fact and speculation that underlie all this charming maiden's mental constitution', but descend he does, using the details of Gwendolen's vagaries to argue that 'sexual intercourse should not be indulged in till after adolescence'.<sup>74</sup>

Although he passes straight from a description of Gwendolen to the question of insanity of adolescence, as if the two states are inextricably interlinked, Clouston does not, surprisingly, draw on the aspects of Gwendolen's characterization which might well illustrate such insanity. Her 'fits of spiritual dread', which are so devastating and disabling, are simply described as 'inchoate religious sentiment', whilst there is no mention at all

of the disturbing detail that she had, during puberty, strangled her sister's canary. The detail is startling when presented in the text; little explanation is given, but it lingers in the memory as perturbing evidence of the 'unmapped country' of Gwendolen's mind, leading into a whole sequence of imagery of death and murder, from the iconography of the opened panel which so terrified Gwendolen, with its 'upturned dead face' and fleeing figure, to her later desires that her sadistic husband, Grandcourt, might die, fears which 'turned as with a dream-change into the terror that she should die with his throttling fingers on her neck avenging that thought'.<sup>75</sup>

Gwendolen's uneasy conscience regarding the 'infelicious murder' of the canary anticipates her later fears; guilt arising from her own desires leads to a terror of throttling fingers, this time around her own neck.<sup>76</sup> Eliot is here drawing on what had become the standard characterization of child mental disturbance as often issuing in cruelty to animals before it escalates to humans.<sup>77</sup> Exploring instinctive behaviour in a child, Maudsley had observed that 'the child is driven by an automatic impulse to kill its stepmother as it would strive to kill a canary bird'.<sup>78</sup> The unarticulated connection here between passionate instinct and the complex psychological structures of family life is taken further by Eliot, who traces through the vibrant contradictions of Gwendolen's psyche from childhood, and canary strangling, to her mental breakdown after Grandcourt's death. Clouston, with his condescending references to 'this charming maiden', captures little of this complexity. For all his compliments to Eliot's subtlety, there is a strong sense in this text that it is the physician, with his mastery of the physiological facts, who offers the truest understanding. Yet his shift from the psychology of adolescence to that of insanity only makes sense in his text through the implied understanding offered by the novel.

Clouston writes firmly in the hereditarian mould. 'What child', he demands in a subsequent work, 'is born in a civilised country without inherited brain weaknesses of some sort or in some degree?'<sup>79</sup> In the pessimistic psychology of the late century, the child is doubly burdened: the carrier of primitive, animalistic passions and also the attenuated nerves of an overdeveloped civilization. In Maudsley's famous phrase, he is ruled by 'the tyranny of his organisation'.<sup>80</sup> The expectation that a child would be free from mental disorder until adulthood has been utterly reversed. Clouston builds on a large body of medical work which had seen the strains placed upon the female body at puberty as a fertile source of hysteria. Increasingly, hysteria was now being traced backwards into childhood. Robert Brudenell

Carter had argued in 1855 that chorea, or St Vitus's Dance, which was one of the few nervous affections recognized at that point in childhood and which commonly struck girls between 8 and 15, was due to a

foreshadowing of the feelings of womanhood, of a kind which they themselves may scarcely realise, or be able to admit, but which a close observer may detect, as exerting considerable control over their thoughts, and as being cherished, perhaps almost unconsciously, and certainly without acknowledgement.<sup>81</sup>

Sexuality is placed backwards into childhood, as a fertile source of mental disorder, but balanced ambivalently on the borders of knowledge and understanding. The convoluted phrasing and repeated suggestions of levels of sexual understanding which are then denied highlight the problems encountered by members of the male medical establishment who entered this territory, eager to point out their own perceptions of child sexuality, but wishing still to retain intact perceptions of child innocence.

Clouston similarly had a problem with female knowledge. On the one hand this manifests itself in his ardent opposition to female education: he even invokes George Eliot again to suggest that all her heroines would have been ruined had they been too bookish. Thus Romola, although educated, sensibly deserted her books and took instead 'to love-making, marriage, self-denial, charity and religion'. In place of over-education he recommends healthy 'romping' for girls between 13 and 20.<sup>82</sup> Whilst school-induced knowledge threatened the healthy development of the reproductive system, knowledge of their own sexuality on the girls' part seemed to present an even greater threat. In his reflections on girlhood, sexuality, and education he returns again and again to the notion of modesty, 'the most delightful, attractive, and necessary of all women's graces'.<sup>83</sup> A psychological analysis of female modesty by a physiologist reveals, he observes, 'the transformation and apotheosis in the higher regions of the brain of reflex impressions from the reproductive organs into a high moral quality, not only beautiful, but absolutely essential to life'.<sup>84</sup> The religious apotheosis would seem to be situated less in the physiology of the body than in the wish fulfilment of the medical observer. Coarse sexuality is transmogrified into redeeming beauty, and the female is purified by a mysterious physiological process which separates her from knowledge of her own sexuality.

Set against this transcendental modesty is the 'obtrusive and grotesque modesty' of the hysterical patient, who clearly draws too much attention to the fact of the sexuality to be concealed, or the child who fails to develop

any modesty at all. Clouston recounts the case of JR, an intelligent, cunning, 8-year-old girl who lacked any 'feminine sense of decency', and who became uglier and uglier until she resembled a witch: 'she represents ugliness of body and unloveliness of mind from hereditary neurotic causes'. She is only an extreme case, Clouston suggests, however, of a normal pattern: 'All physicians and all observers will recognize the same thing in a lesser degree in scores of young women whom they know, who, from the age of thirteen, steadily got less attractive in mind and body.'<sup>85</sup> The Victorian male predilection for the child-woman is here given scientific validity: the problem lies not in the eyes of the perceiver but in the girls themselves, whose increasing unattractiveness (as expressed in their lack of requisite sexual modesty) is deemed a symptom of heredity neurosis.

With his prolific, if repetitive, writings on child insanity and sexuality, from his early articles in the 1870s through to *The Neuroses of Development* (1891) and *The Hygiene of Mind* (1906), Clouston helped consolidate emerging medical interest in child sexuality and insanity. One can trace from the late 1870s increased levels of discussion of these areas across the medical periodical press, in the *Lancet* and *British Medical Journal* as well as the more specialized *Journal of Mental Science*.<sup>86</sup> Thus the *Lancet* in 1889 carried a report and cautious editorial on the moderate Clifford Allbutt's paper on 'Insanity in Children' to the Medico-Psychological Association meeting in York, which was then reported in greater detail in the *Journal of Mental Science*, including a summary of the lively discussion that ensued.<sup>87</sup> All agreed that child insanity was far from rare, some focusing on Allbutt's points on child suicide (which, as I will argue in chapter 18, was a pressing concern at this time), and others, like George Savage, confirming the problems presented by sexual desire in childhood.<sup>88</sup> Allbutt's paper formed the basis of his entry on 'Insanity in Children' for Daniel Hack Tuke's *Dictionary of Psychological Medicine* (1892), which, as a sign of recent developments, was the first medical compendium to offer detailed entries on a range of child psychiatric issues, including lengthy contributions from Clouston on 'Developmental Insanities and Psychoses' (including night terrors and the insanities of puberty) and Donkin and Charcot on Hysteria.<sup>89</sup>

The importance of adolescence as a medical area of study in the 1890s was confirmed by the publication in 1895 of Maudsley's *The Pathology of Mind*, a reworking of his 1867 text which extended his work on childhood insanity to include a new chapter on 'Pubescent or Adolescent Insanities'. As in Clouston's work, it is difficult to differentiate the 'insanities' of this age

group from the depiction of puberty, characterized by 'blind longings and cravings, undefined aspirations, tremulous pantings for the unknown, large and vague enthusiasms, accompanied by a dreamy sadness, a brooding want, a not altogether unpleasing melancholy'.<sup>90</sup> Thus the sufferer from the insanity of melancholia 'is capricious and wilful in behaviour, perplexing and distressing parents by perverse whims, outbreaks of temper, rude speeches, and sullen defiance of their authority' and insists on pursuing an unreasonable independence, 'all the while complaining bitterly of being misunderstood and ill-used when not allowed to have his or her exacting and impracticable way'.<sup>91</sup> Whilst for a modern-day reader the description might appear an excellent account of the stereotype of the moody teenager we now view as normative, for Maudsley it was emphatically a state of insanity. He has no time for parents who express sympathy for their offspring and who wish to claim they are suffering from hysteria and not insanity. Such behaviour indicates an 'insane strain in the parental temperament': sympathetic concern becomes itself an expression of the insanity they have bequeathed to their offspring.<sup>92</sup> Similarly, with reference to the child sufferer from moral insanity, who is sent home time after time from different schools, he observes: 'Seeing that a bad mental organisation is just as much a manufactured article as a bad machine, it is not a little pathetic to see parents amazed and aghast in face of such a product of them and their stocks.'<sup>93</sup>

The emphasis throughout is on hereditary weakness, and on wresting control from parents who have already wrought sufficient damage by their actions earlier in life. Maudsley's stance is contradictory. The fact that children and adolescents are 'manufactured articles', with little control over their own actions, does not prevent him from writing in a tone of disgust with regard to their moral imbecility, their deceits and impostures, or addiction to self-abuse. Yet he also argues that suicide attempts should be taken seriously, and that the deceitful actions of hysterics are evidence not so much of 'wilful impostures', as many fellow medics claimed, but rather of a more fundamental dissolution of the structures of the brain, a literal 'demoralisation'.<sup>94</sup> Holding to the common view that women were more likely to suffer from disorders at puberty due to the overwhelming dominance of the reproductive system in their organization, he evinces sympathy for any young woman denied the natural outlet of marriage for her sexual energies, and who has instead 'the dreary prospect of dying to herself through a weary sequence of days without aim, without desire, without hope'.<sup>95</sup> The figure created in this rhetorical flourish is that of Tennyson's Mariana, or of the



innumerable heroines in the Victorian novel, such as Caroline in Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley*, who are depicted as consuming their own energies for want of a sexual outlet.

As the work of Crichton Browne, Clouston, Maudsley, and others suggests, Freud was mistaken in suggesting that no attention had been paid to childhood sexuality prior to the work of Stanley Hall. Similarly, although Stanley Hall is often credited with creating the modern concept of adolescence in his monumental work of that name in 1904, it is clear that he was building on the work of his predecessors in this area (though unlike Clouston he does not make a marked distinction between puberty and adolescence). Anticipating Freud's essay of the following year, Hall does suggest that writers have so far not paid enough attention to the role of sexuality in development, and indeed cites Freud and Breuer's study of hysteria to support his argument, although it is highly unlikely that Freud could have approved of his ensuing overblown celebration of married love, as a 'holy intoxication' when 'the race is incarnated in the individual and remembers its lost paradise'.<sup>96</sup> Hall's theory of adolescence is grounded in evolutionary psychology and anthropology. Adolescence, he argues, 'is a new birth, for the higher and more completely human traits are now born'. The suggestion is that the child represents the animal stage of development, and only in adolescence can one trace the dawn of full humanity: 'The child comes from and harks back to a remoter past; the adolescent is neo-atavistic, and in him the later acquisitions of the race slowly become prepotent'.<sup>97</sup> From this viewpoint, adolescence becomes a doubly troubling period, witnessing the multiple emergence of sexuality and 'higher' human traits as well as the problems of hereditary transmission, so that 'every step of the upward way is strewn with wreckage of body, mind, and morals', with arrested development, perversion, and secret vice emerging at every turn.<sup>98</sup> As he later argues, 'psychoses and neuroses abound in early adolescent years more than at any other period of life'.<sup>99</sup>

Like his predecessors, Hall turns to autobiographies and literary texts for accounts of this crucial stage in life, although, as he notes, even 'the best observers see but very little of what goes on in the youthful soul, the development of which is largely subterranean'. Rather surprisingly, given his own representations of the traumas of adolescence, he argues that confessionalism 'is generally over-drawn, distorted, and especially the pains of this age are represented as too keen'.<sup>100</sup> There follows a brief summary of Eliot's representations of Maggie Tulliver and Gwendolen

Harleth, although it is unclear whether these are offered as 'over-drawn' pictures or examples of more acceptable portraits. It is very possible that Hall had in mind Eliot's depiction of Maggie's struggles with her own youthful passions through the symbolism of the river Floss when he depicted puberty for a girl as like 'floating down a broadening river into an open sea'.<sup>101</sup> Whilst Eliot portrays the familial, social, and economic complexities which govern Maggie's problematic emergence into sexuality, as she and Stephen are 'Borne along by the tide' towards the open sea, Hall by contrast creates a virtual religion out of 'periodicity' or menstruation. Comte, in attempting to create a 'religion of humanity', offered the mother figure as a focus for worship; Hall, by contrast, places menstruation in this role. Thus a menstruating woman 'feels her womanhood and glories in it like a goddess'. Feminists are wrong, he suggests, in accepting male negative views of this state, for woman 'will not profane her own Sabbath of biological ordination, but will keep it holy as to the Lord, for he has hallowed it as a day of blessing from on high'.<sup>102</sup> To make sense of this farrago, it is important to note that he quotes sympathetically Havelock Ellis's resurrection of the old argument that the menstrual flow coincides with that of sexual desire.<sup>103</sup> Female sexuality is rendered safe by transforming it into a religious rite, just as Clouston had celebrated female modesty as the 'apotheosis' of 'reflex impressions' from the reproductive organs into a state of high beauty and morality. It comes as no surprise that Hall's worship of womanhood is linked, as in Clouston, to the belief that female education was largely undesirable. Its focus should be training for motherhood, and it should take place in the country, ruled by the 'goddess hygeia', and its principle should be 'to broaden by retarding; to keep the purely mental back, and by every method to bring the intuitions to the front'.<sup>104</sup> Like the child, woman is closer to the secrets of our primitive past and hence holds the key to our future.<sup>105</sup> Hall concludes his monumental work with a chapter on 'Adolescent Races', who encompass one-third of the human race, for 'most savages in most respects are children, or, because of sexual maturity, more properly, adolescents of adult size'.<sup>106</sup> He urges respect for these child-like people, who might hold the key to our own future, ending, finally with Clouston's image of the possible need to employ a new 'rape of the Sabines' to recuperate our energies, should our culture become too effete.<sup>107</sup>

Hall's work brings together multiple strands in its exploration of sexuality and adolescence. The fairly negative constructions of the psychiatric community of Clouston, Maudsley, or Crichton Browne are yoked with the

more idealizing elements to be found in the child study movement (over which he presided in America). Various reinterpretations of anthropology and evolutionary psychology, not to mention a fair sprinkling of some of the concerns of the emerging science of eugenics, are also thrown into the mix. Amidst all this surging interest in child sexuality and the phenomena of adolescence, literary texts, as well as popular discussions in the periodical press, contributed substantially to the changing climate of opinion. In his 1891 work *The Neuroses of Development*, Clouston suggested that it was literature's role to unveil the 'pathology of development': 'Without going the length of Tolstoi, one could wish that biographers and writers of serious fiction more fully took into account the facts and the laws of physiology and heredity in doing their work.'<sup>108</sup> As his own use of Eliot indicates, novelists were indeed addressing these issues. The following section will look at three very different literary texts of the era which explore the domain of childhood sexuality.

# IO

## Childhood, Sexuality, and the Novel

**T**he *Ordeal of Richard Feverel* set a new standard for explicitness in dealing with adolescent male sexuality. In the later part of the century, contrary to the observations of Clouston, one finds increased attention paid in the novel to the details of sexual development. The first two texts to be considered in this chapter explicitly address the physiological transformations of female puberty: Juliana Ewing's *Six to Sixteen: A Story for Girls* (1875) and Sarah Grand's *The Beth Book* (1897). Both take the form of fictional autobiographies of female development, but in the case of Ewing, written explicitly for a younger age group who were themselves undergoing the traumas of puberty. The third text, by contrast, Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), is tantalizingly silent; it deals less with child sexuality itself than adult preoccupations with the issue.

### *Six to Sixteen*

*Six to Sixteen* was first published in 1872 in *Aunt Judy's Magazine*, the influential children's periodical edited by Juliana's mother, Margaret Gatty 1866–74, and subsequently by Juliana Ewing herself (1874–6). As the title suggests, it chronicles the narrator's life from 6 to 16, blending instructional hints with a lightly comic analysis of the problems of growing up and child-rearing. The problems of puberty are captured in the account of the narrator's relative, 'Poor Mathilda', who at the age of 12 enters 'what is called "an awkward age"; an age more awkward with some girls than others'.<sup>1</sup> As the text makes clear, the term was clearly in general usage at

the time.<sup>2</sup> Modern readers are most familiar with the term from Henry James's novel of 1899, where it refers, however, to the situation of Nanda, aged 18 (a time which for Clouston and others marked the transition from puberty to adolescence). In James's work, the meaning of the phrase is transformed, for the awkwardness refers less to Nanda herself than to the adults who surround her, who continually refer to her as a child, yet lust after her. The convolutions and indirectness of James's style are used to full effect to depict the psychological and social contortions undergone by the adults as they try to come to terms with the 'so-called' child's purity and simultaneous entry into sexual knowledge. In Ewing's text, by contrast, the term indicates entry into puberty, and Matilda is given all the symptoms outlined in contemporary medical texts, including headaches and fainting fits. She suffers from a 'morbid condition—of body and mind' and becomes 'irritable, moody and perverse'. Silent and unsociable, she starts to dislike appearing in company and develops a painful sense of her own personal appearance, which, as the narrator suggests, was exceedingly 'awkward', with expanses of bony wrists and thin ankles on display.<sup>3</sup> We also find out later that she has conceived a passion for the 'lunatic gentleman' with 'the chiselled face and weird eyes' whom they used to encounter walking by the sea.<sup>4</sup>

It seems as if the narrative is offering a direct replication of a medical case study, but it swiftly takes an interesting swerve when alarmist concerns about young girls' behaviour become the focus of gentle mockery. Mathilda's mother gathers all her female friends around her to 'take counsel', including Mrs O'Connor, whose brother-in-law is a medical officer in an asylum and has written a book about how 'mad women go out of their minds through temper' (the name is perhaps a reworking of John Conolly).<sup>5</sup> Their gossip focuses on the difficulties of managing young girls and includes stories 'to make your hair stand on end' of girls who 'went out of their senses' after refusing to go out anywhere, or who were found to have lost their appetite through eating beetles.<sup>6</sup> Popular periodicals are clearly a fertile source of alarm and advice. Thus Mrs St John recounts how the *Milliner and Mantuamaker* carried,

a most extraordinary correspondence . . . after that shoemaker's daughter in Lambeth was tried for poisoning her little brother. . . . The letters were all about all the dreadful things done by girls in their teens. There were letters from twelve Materfamilias . . . and four Paterfamilias, and 'An Anxious Widower', and

'A Minister', and three 'M.D.'s'. But the most awful letter was from 'A Student of Human Nature', and it ended up that every girl of fifteen was a murderess at heart.<sup>7</sup>

This playful account highlights the ways in which the criminal cases, which furnished the basis for the alienists' theories of childhood mental disturbance, also became the focus of sensationalist popular reporting, which was in turn further exaggerated in each retelling, feeding into the growing social perception that girls in their teens were both disruptive and disturbed—medically, socially, and culturally.

As Dinah Craik noted in her 1863 article, 'In her Teens', the years between 12 and 20 are 'a season anything but pleasant; a crisis in which the whole heart and brain are full of tumult, when all life looks strange and bewildering—delirious with exquisite unrealities,—and agonized with griefs equally chimerical and unnatural'.<sup>8</sup> In Ewing's text, the escalating exchanges of the women are punctuated by the growing anger of the rational father, Major Buller, who declares, "'I'd rather the coarsest novel that ever was written were picked up by the children . . . than this morbid muddle of disease and crime, and unprincipled parents and practitioners"'.<sup>9</sup> The parents are unprincipled in being too ready to believe the alarmist accounts of disturbed minds and criminal propensities, or the advertisements for schools which claim to offer the only cure, whilst the medical practitioners are also to blame for their own willingness to seize upon and popularize sensational cases in order to reinforce the perceived need for their services. As Clouston grandiloquently claimed, physicians are 'the priests of the body and the guardians of the physical and mental qualities of the race'.<sup>10</sup>

Ewing's text is not, however, an overall attack on contemporary medical work in this area, only its excesses. Thus the novel follows closely the warnings of Clouston and others when Mathilda, against the better judgment of Major Buller, is sent away to school. The message is one of anti-cramming, or brain-forcing: Mathilda finds 'her head crammed and her health neglected'. Unlike her medical peers, however, Ewing explicitly states her support for education for women, only not of this unhealthy kind. She attacks women's 'crass ignorance of the laws of health' perpetuated by such establishments, questioning, through her narrator, 'whether it is an unfortunate development of a confusion between ignorance and innocence, and of mistaken notions of delicacy'. She is quite clear as to its consequences, however: 'Unhappily, a studied ignorance of the evils that

flesh is heir to is apt to bring them in double force about one's ears, and this kind of delicate-mindedness to bring delicacy of body in its train.<sup>11</sup> For all its insistence on knowledge, the passage pursues its own delicate-mindedness of expression, although it is clear that the question of the relation between ignorance and innocence is that addressed by Acton and so many others in relation to sexual knowledge. Ewing's representation of 'Madame' running the school through surveillance, opening letters, prying into drawers, and listening through keyholes, 'from the highest sense of duty', harks back to Charlotte Brontë's novel *Villette*, where Madame Beck rules her school by 'watching and spying everywhere' even though 'she seemed to know that keeping girls in distrustful restraint, in blind ignorance, and under a surveillance that left them no moment and no corner for retirement, was not the best way to make them grow up honest and modest women'.<sup>12</sup> In the medical and literary texts of the era, a constant correlation is drawn between female education and female sexual knowledge. From whatever point on the spectrum writers were situated, there was an assumption that the acquisition of intellectual knowledge was indissolubly tied to the workings of sexuality. At its most extreme, Clouston and Maudsley and others insisted that the exertion of intellectual energies would seriously impair female reproductive development. Ewing and Brontë, on the other hand, drew attention to the fact that the obsession with female sexuality which fuelled the culture of constant surveillance in girls' schools was deeply damaging. Healthy learning could only proceed on a basis of sexual knowledge and trust. Although deeply divided in many respects, both sides share the assumption that sexuality holds the key to female mental development.

### *The Beth Book*

Clouston's plea for novelists to show a greater awareness of the physiological laws of development appears to be directly answered in Sarah Grand's *The Beth Book*, which in its frankness far outstrips the disparaged Tolstoi text. It was published in 1897, the same year as James's novel *What Maisie Knew*, which focused on one of the major questions in developmental psychology—the content of a child's mind—and the year before *The Turn of the Screw*, which explored adult preoccupations with the possible sexual content of children's minds. The heroine is only 13 when she too has a seaside episode, only this time it is not yearning from afar for an insane gentleman but rather

for a highly presentable young man of 17 or 18 named Alfred. Beth is spying on him from the clifftop when 'the treacherous clay cliff crumbled, and the great mass of it on which she was lying slid down bodily on to the shining sand'.<sup>13</sup> The text offers a wonderful literalization of both the Fall and the earth moving beneath one's feet. As if this symbolism were not sufficient, the couple are then trapped by the incoming tide. They stand on the fallen mound as the water gradually rises, only kissing when the sea reaches the level of Beth's breast. Lapped in the waters of desire, they are almost submerged, but are saved by Beth's confident foreknowledge that they will withstand and survive. Taken on its own, one would think that Grand was indulging in florid symbolism for want of the confidence to confront Beth's sexuality directly. Since this is far from the case, it should be read, rather, as Grand's playful aggrandizing of conventional euphemistic tropes. Even before Alfred's emergence on the scene we have been informed that 'a nature like hers, rich in every healthy possibility, was bound to crave for love early'. She has developed early physically, and 'youth and sex already began to hang out their signals' as she approaches her 'blossoming time'.<sup>14</sup> While sensation novelists such as Rhoda Broughton had created a line of panting, desiring young heroines, Grand goes one stage further in the explicitness of her portrait, and the sheer youth of her subject. She intervenes directly to defend her heroine:

There comes a time to all healthy young people when Nature says: 'Mate, my children, and be happy.' If the impulse come prematurely, it is not the young people but the old ones that are to blame; they should have seen to it that the intellect, which acts as a curb on the senses when properly trained and occupied, developed first.<sup>15</sup>

Whilst Clouston was repeatedly telling his audiences that mating should not commence until full reproductive growth is achieved at 25, Grand here writes positively of the mating instincts in a girl of 13 (at a time when the age of consent had recently been raised to 16 following the campaigns against child prostitution of W. T. Stead).<sup>16</sup>

Grand attempts a precarious balancing act in her arguments with reference to Beth's early sexuality. It is, she maintains, exceedingly healthy, far more so than the dreams Beth substitutes for Alfred once he has been sent away. On the other hand, she also suggests that it is a product of unbalanced development, to be blamed on adults who had failed to guide her education properly and develop her intellectual powers. Whilst Acton argued, with



reference to male sexuality, that it was your 'puny exotic' or intellectually precocious child who suffered most from sexual precocity, Grand, like Ewing, offers a different model of energy dynamics: lack of development in the intellectual area encourages sensuality to flourish. Since Beth is in part a fictionalized self-portrait, Grand is somewhat reluctant to give the senses full priority, and offers the following compromise: 'It cannot be said, however, that the senses awoke before the intellect in Beth; but because of the irregularities in her training, the want of discipline and order, they took possession of her first.'<sup>17</sup> Similarly, in *Six to Sixteen*, Mathilda is seen to fall prey to 'morbid irritability' due to her deeply flawed governess and inadequate mother, who fill her head full of frivolities rather than deepen her mind.

Although Grand's focus is on female sexuality, she also addresses the question of adolescent male sexuality. 'The boy', she declares magnanimously, 'is not naturally like a beast.' Depravity can occur equally in girls or boys, and is 'oftener acquired than inherited'. Whilst a girl's surroundings tend to 'safeguard her from the acquisition', if they do not 'she becomes as bad as the boy'. The boy, on the contrary, if sent to public school, is 'systematically trained to be vicious', through habitual conversation, secretly circulated books, and 'their traditional code of vice' so that he becomes 'familiarised with the most hoggish habits'. Even if by a miracle he escape 'practical initiation', the 'seed of corruption' has been sown and will 'bear fruit almost inevitably'. Luckily for Beth, Alfred had 'escaped this contamination by being kept at home at a day school' and is thus 'as refined and high-minded as he was virile' (an unusual combination in Grand's fiction).<sup>18</sup> The dangers of Beth's schooling, by contrast, are not so much initiation into masturbation but, as in Ewing's text, the monotonous cramming, and lack of physical exercise, that produce outbreaks of imitative hysteria across the school.

Writing with the new-found freedom of the 1890s, and from the self-conscious position of a New Woman author, Grand was inevitably more explicit in her treatment of youthful sexuality than Ewing, the daughter of a clergyman, whose text was designed to fit into the morally improving pages of *Aunt Judy's Magazine*. Both, however, followed contemporary medical thought in seeing sexual development and education as intimately inter-related for girls. In their insistence on the need for regular exercise to balance school work, Ewing and Grand were at one with Acton, Carter, Crichton Browne, or Clouston. Where they differed, however, was in

suggesting that girls should conquer the imbalances of puberty, and the dawning of sexuality, not simply by physical exercise but by the true development of the mind.

### *The Turn of the Screw*

Any analysis of childhood sexuality in Victorian literature would be incomplete without reference to my final text, which has no overt references to 'hoggish habits' or 'secret vices' yet is utterly suffused with ideas of the child as a sexual being. The tale has been read repeatedly in Freudian terms as a study of sexual repression on the part of the governess, but rarely placed in the historical context of the obsession with child sexuality and the inner workings of the child mind, which fuelled both the psychiatry of the era and the child study movement of the 1890s.<sup>19</sup> This famously enigmatic tale is not concerned particularly with the two children themselves, but rather with the fascination that childhood indecipherability exerted over the adult mind, and the ways in which children are made the vehicles of adult projection. Miles, a boy not yet 10 who is sent home from school, is a familiar figure both from medical texts and popular discussions of the corrupting effects of male schools (as Acton's correspondent confirmed, whole schools of boys under 10 could be initiates in the 'secret vice').<sup>20</sup> When the governess first hears of Miles's expulsion, her immediate response is that he had to be removed because he would be 'an injury to the others'. She later amplifies that he would 'contaminate' or 'corrupt' them, language indelibly associated in the public mind with the effects of 'unnatural practices'. The response of the housekeeper, Mrs Grose, is more apt than she realizes: 'Are you afraid he'll corrupt *you*?'<sup>21</sup> In tracing the mounting obsession and hysteria of the governess, the tale outlines the attractions, and the terrors, of imagining child sexuality, suggesting how far adult psychological stability might depend on imaginative investment in a realm of childhood purity.

Crichton Browne had asked his readers to imagine that 'the mind of childhood, that which we are accustomed to look upon as emblematic of all that is simple, and pure, and innocent, may be assailed by the most loathsome of psychical disorders, viz, satyriasis, or nymphomania'.<sup>22</sup> *The Turn of the Screw* is a tale about what happens when one allows oneself to imagine such things. The imagination is not, however, solely on the part of the

governess. In its teasing, tantalizing form, the tale also entraps the reader, calling on the readerly imagination to supply the gaps in evidence and to imagine for themselves the real reason for Miles's expulsion, or to adjudicate, through engagement with the potentially supernatural, on the possibility that Peter Quint and Miss Jessel might have corrupted the children. Like the original listeners, gathered round the fire, eager to hear the 'delicious' 'dreadfulness' of the tale, we become active participants, caught in a web of our own making, which a simple decision as to whether the supernatural is involved does nothing to resolve. The strength of the text lies in its lack of specificity; it is we who give flesh and body to the governess's fears. The governess herself is also a familiar figure from psychiatric texts: the young woman who conceives a 'chaste passion' for a man usually above her in station (and frequently a clergyman), who becomes lost in a world of fantasy.<sup>23</sup> In the figures of Miss Jessel and Peter Quint we have a reworking of the familiar trope of the corrupting nurse, who, it was feared, introduced her young charges to sexual practices.<sup>24</sup>

From her own liminal position, belonging neither to the class of the master nor to that of the 'menial', the governess intensifies fears of disruptive working-class sexuality within the enclave of the middle-class household.<sup>25</sup> Although he might masquerade in the master's waistcoats, Peter Quint is 'no gentleman', a trait exhibited most clearly in the repeated detail that he wears no hat. As in *The Mill on the Floss*, the wearing or not of a hat is highly charged with sexual significance. When the governess fears that Flora has gone off to join Miss Jessel, she counters Mrs Grose's bewildered response, 'Without a hat?', with a damning judgement: 'Isn't that woman always without one?' (pp. 206–7). The hatless state signifies both sexual licence and a descent to working-class behaviour. It is a measure of the governess's own fall that in rushing in pursuit of Flora, she goes out 'with nothing on' (p. 207). When the governess finally becomes convinced of Flora's guilt, Flora is transformed instantly from the beautiful, innocent middle-class child of her first imaginings into the equivalent of a street child, 'hard . . . common and almost ugly', whilst her speech 'might have been that of a vulgarly pert little girl in the street' (pp. 214–15). With the confirmation of her sexual precocity, the governess instantly relocates Flora in the despised working class.

Through his brother William, Henry James was thoroughly acquainted with the workings of the Society for Psychical Research, and numerous examples of times when spirits had either appeared to, or spoken through,

children.<sup>26</sup> In its preoccupation with the notion that children could become possessed by the dead, spiritualism offered another version of theories of heredity: the idea that a child, as epitomized in Hardy's disturbing creation, Father Time, could be an expression not of its own life but of those who have gone before. James uses the supernatural machinery both to maintain maximum indecipherability and to explore the role of memory. The governess tells herself that 'Forbidden ground was the question of the return of the dead in general and of whatever, in especial, might survive, for memory, of the friends little children had lost' (p. 184). The supernatural, in this regard, becomes a literalization of the workings of memory. The governess is desperate to construct her charges as innocent of history or memory. Part of the beauty of Miles, she suggests, is that it feels 'as if he had had, as it were, no history. We expect of a small child scant enough "antecedents", but there was in this beautiful little boy something extraordinarily sensitive, yet extraordinarily happy, that, more than in any creature of his age I have seen, struck me as beginning anew each day' (p. 140). Miles, in her imagination, is the perfect incarnation of childhood, with the slate wiped clean every day so he remains the ultimate expression of untried innocence, with no memories, inherited or acquired, to tarnish his mind.

The levels of self-delusion and denial in this vision are rendered even more evident by the immediate narrative context. The governess suggests that the children were 'like those cherubs of the anecdote, who had—morally at any rate—nothing to whack!' (p. 140). The allusion is to an anecdote from Charles Lamb about a schoolmaster at Christ's Hospital who liked beating schoolboys' buttocks. On hearing of his death Coleridge had observed: 'Poor J.B! may all his faults be forgiven; and may he be wafted to bliss by little cherub boys, all head and wings, with no *bottoms* to reproach his sublunary infirmities.'<sup>27</sup> The submerged allusion offers a frank acknowledgement of the erotic qualities of school spanking; the governess's observation that the children 'morally' had no bottoms only draws attention to her awareness of their physical bodies, which are not, as in Coleridge's image, conveniently cut off at the waist. (There is also perhaps a continuation here of the imagery of her sightings of Peter Quint, whom she sees 'only from the waist up', as if her disquiet at the overt sexuality of his bare head and hard stare might be neutralized by this visual castration.)<sup>28</sup> The allusion also follows on from her meditations on why Miles might have been expelled from school, which she projects as 'the little horrid unclean school world', ruled over by 'stupid, sordid headmasters' (p. 140). This is

perhaps the closest the governess gets to rendering her sexual fears explicit. Her thoughts move from 'unclean' acts at school through 'sordid' headmasters, who, as in Coleridge's anecdote, derive pleasure from child-beating, to her own conclusions that Miles could not have been bad at school, because 'if he had been wicked he would have "caught it", and I should have caught it by the rebound—I should have found the trace, should have felt the wound and the dishonour. I could reconstitute nothing at all, and he was therefore an angel' (pp. 140–1). The governess seems to subscribe to the view expressed by Rousseau and Acton, that 'beating on the nates' could lead a child on to a life of masturbation, with all the outward signs and symptoms that such a practice was held to bring forth. She luxuriates disgustedly in the picture before rejecting it outright for the angelic Miles, who bears no 'trace'. In the midst of her own seething imagination, she clings desperately to the belief that sexual induction must leave some form of outer mark upon a child, some signal to an observer that could warn of potential contamination. Ghosts, in this regard, become the equivalent of outward markers; they offer mute, disturbing testimony to concealed, corrupting memories within the child. Later, as the governess's imaginings become darker, she distinguishes herself from the 'uninitiated' who would see all 'frankness and freedom' where she now could read the signs of evil: 'Say that, by the dark prodigy I knew, the imagination of all evil *had* been opened up to him: all the justice within me ached for the proof that it could ever have flowered into an act' (p. 205). As others might ache with sexual desire, she 'aches' for proof of her sexual imaginings: catching Miles *in flagrante delicto*, it seems, would now be preferable to the self-imposed tortures of her own corrupted mind. The appearance of childhood innocence imposes an almost intolerable burden on the adult mind.

The governess prides herself on her circumlocutions, and what she regards as her heroic decision not to ask Miles directly about what had happened at school, or indeed with Peter Quint. The governess's dilemma is that discussed so frequently in medical and advice literature with reference to the complex relations between innocence and ignorance: how far is the adult justified in introducing potentially corrupting sexual knowledge to a young child? Will the attempt to warn of potential dangers only lead to an early flowering of corrupting practices? The governess, significantly, introduces the issue in terms of a power struggle: Miles 'had me', she declares. She assumes his guilt but cannot break the social taboos surrounding discussion of the 'unnamed and untouched' (p. 184). Her conclusion is

fittingly melodramatic: 'He "had" me indeed, and in a cleft stick; for who would ever absolve me, who would consent that I should go unhung, if, by the faintest tremor of an overture, I were the first to introduce into our perfect intercourse an element so dire' (p. 178). She imagines Miles as her antagonist, triumphantly mocking her, as she is bound and gagged by her commitment to ideological projections of childhood innocence. Even in this statement of her dilemma, displacement is at work, for the crime which she imagines would deserve hanging is that of 'those caretakers of the young who minister to superstitions and fears' (p. 178). She places herself in the tradition of the nurse who harms and terrifies her charges through stories of apparitions and ghosts, rather than the more potent parallel tradition of the nurse who corrupts by introducing the child to sexual knowledge.

Part of James's own fascination with the figure of the child at this period was that it could function to intensify all the indirectness, the power games, the 'unnamed and untouched' of adult intercourse; to impose sexual knowledge, or to name directly, could in this case indeed be a crime, a murder of the cherished construct of childhood innocence. A true child, in the governess's eye, would be one without experience or history, recreated afresh each morning so that there can be no progress or development, no worrying traces of a past, just an unadulterated present. The child, in this sense, is unknowable precisely because it has no experience, no history which can be known. Yet, James is writing at the height of evolutionary psychology, when it was believed that the child, as Sully phrased it, was the 'memento of the race' carrying within it the legacy of past experience, both animal and human. The ghosts function, in this regard, as warnings of an undisclosed past, of innate or inherited tendencies which must give the lie to assumptions of inborn innocence.

The governess is trapped: seduced by this vision of a darker, more animalistic childhood, yet wishing to cling on to her constructions of childhood innocence which in turn hold at bay her own unacknowledged sexual desires. She is paralysed, both by fear of expressing the unnamed and by inducing in her charges that other mortal sin: the lie. Thus she instantly recoils in terror from her own suggestion that they should ask Flora about Miss Jessel: 'no sooner had I spoken than I caught myself up. "No, for God's sake, *don't!* She'll say she isn't—she'll lie!"' (p. 157). Terror of the childhood lie compounds that of sexuality. Instead, they all take their places in a masquerade, with Miles and Flora, to the governess's eyes, playing to perfection their role as innocent children, which is, she declares,

‘a game...a policy and a fraud’ (p. 181). In a new variation of the innocence/ignorance dichotomy, she maintains they ‘haven’t been good—they’ve only been absent’ (p. 181). Whilst present bodily, they have been living alternate lives. The governess is willing to ‘swear that, literally, in my presence, but with my direct sense of it closed, they had visitors who were known and were welcome’ (p. 186). ‘Literally’ is under great pressure in this sentence. Fears of hidden childhood sexuality are here conflated with those of imagination, and investment in imaginary lands. Miles and Flora, the governess suggests, are living embodiments of a lie; the more they enact their innocence, the more she suspects they see ‘things terrible and unguessable and that sprang from dreadful passages of intercourse in the past’ (p. 188). The appearance of innocence now becomes the external marker of those missing traces of past experience.

Like the evolutionary psychologists, the governess learns to read the children as expressions of a buried past that holds the key to self-knowledge. It is a self-knowledge, however, which she is eager to hold at bay. As she and the pupils circle around each other, she has ‘the suspicion of being watched from under cover’. Her role of surveillance has been usurped, she feels, and herself exposed, as her history is drawn out of her by her pupils, who ‘pulled with an art of their own the strings of my invention and my memory’ (p. 185). All her efforts at controlling and deciphering her pupils lead only, it seems, to an unravelling of her own defences, an unveiling of her own history, whilst the children retain their threatening inscrutability. The idea of demonic possession becomes for the governess a way of framing her belief that the children possess traits and memories that extend outside the limits of normality. When Flora is, to her imagining, at the lake with Miss Jessel she denounces her as ‘not a child: she’s an old, old woman’ (p. 209). She becomes indeed a perverted expression of Sully’s vision of a child as the memento of the race—a condensed, withered embodiment of generations of female sexual experience.

Although it is Miles who has been sent home mysteriously from school, the governess has far less difficulty in believing in the historical contamination of Flora than that of the male child for whose soul she believes she struggles. She seems to accept readily the sexuality of the young female child, but is less certain with reference to the older, budding male. Their final confrontation takes the form of a moral and religious exemplar from evangelical didactic texts. If Miles confesses to a lie, and emerges into the triumphant realm of truth, he will be saved. His confession, however, is a

disappointment. The reason that he was dismissed from school, he states, is that 'he said things'. One might think that, for someone who lives her life in the unsaid, this would be the ultimate crime for the governess, but it clearly fails to live up to her graphic imaginings, and indeed leads to a moment of self-doubt, raising the 'appalling alarm of his being perhaps innocent. It was for the instant confounding and bottomless, for if he *were* innocent, what then on earth was I?' (p. 234). The question lies at the heart of the text, revealing how the governess's own self-definition is complexly interrelated with her construction of Miles. Her own innocence is dependent on the truth of her imaginings of Miles's depravity; it is possibly no accident that this moment is for her 'bottomless', an expression of moral extremity that inevitably carries echoes of her more sordid imaginings of Miles's sexual conduct and experiences at school. Ethical, epistemological, and ontological questions combine in a radically unstable mix. The crisis occurs when the 'unnamed' is named: "'Peter Quint—you devil!'" Yet articulation only increases ambiguity. Is it Peter Quint, or the governess herself, whom Miles addresses as 'you devil'? The governess, however, takes his 'supreme surrender of the name' as a 'tribute to my devotion'; indecipherability has been conquered, and the murky inner secrets of the child's mind opened up to adult control. Miles, in her view, can thus be saved, yet her description of the cry he utters, as 'of a creature hurled over an abyss', clearly aligns him with Satan. She catches him passionately in his 'fall', only to realize that she holds a lifeless body, 'his little heart, dispossessed, had stopped beating' (p. 236). The governess casts the narrative as a classic case of demonic dispossession, with Miles's death a vindication of all her fears: the child was so imbued with evil that 'dispossession' leaves only an empty shell. For the reader, however, the questions of innocence and guilt are far less clear-cut. In this final scene the governess becomes the joint embodiment of the two popular stereotypes of the untrustworthy nurse: the nurse as source of sexual corruption of the young and as the teller of frightening tales which can cause children to die of fright. James is not simply endorsing these stereotypes, however, but casting his net wider to encompass the cultural preoccupation with 'knowing' and interpreting the child mind which became so prevalent in the 1890s.

In her probing and prodding, and determination to expose the inner life, the governess combines the earlier evangelical conviction of child sinfulness with the more recent practices of the devotees of child study or psychiatry, who were equally concerned with unveiling the hidden secrets of the child



mind. James's tale represents the triumph of indecipherability; the children remain, at the close, as enigmatic as before, whilst we learn of all the twists and turns and evasions of the governess's mind, which in its obsessions with child depravity could in turn be said to be 'possessed'. Through the heightened ambiguity of its form, James's tale functions as a challenge to all those who seek to cast their own projections onto the figure of the child, or exhibit a need to define, articulate, and hence control. Readers who contribute their own imaginings become embroiled like the governess in a web of potential guilt, so that they too must ask, in conclusion: 'if he *were* innocent, what then on earth was I?'

## II

# The Science of Child Development

The rise of child psychiatry was paralleled by the emergence, in the last three decades of the century, of a science of child development. Although interlocking at many points with psychiatric discourse, it pursued a different, far more optimistic trajectory, exploring the mental and physiological processes of normal child development, often from the point of birth. The beginnings of British scientific interest in the area are often traced to the publication of Darwin's article 'A Biographical Sketch of an Infant', in the journal *Mind* in 1877, which clearly had a catalytic effect on the field, giving rise to numerous other scientific studies of a child's early years.<sup>1</sup> Given the Romantic interest in the figure of the child, and the narratives of child development to be found in the mid-century works of Dickens, Brontë, and Eliot, it is surprising, in some respects, that the science of the child did not take hold at an earlier date. Certainly there had been intense interest in the 'wild child' during the Romantic era, with Jean Itard's study of the 'Young Savage of Aveyron' (1801) offering one of the first great studies of child development: the child, aged 11 or 12 when discovered, was treated as a form of infant, or blank slate, before his acculturation, and education, commenced. Rousseau's theories had inspired the educational experiments of the Edgeworths and Thomas Day, whilst the idea of the 'baby diary' as an aid to studying the processes of development also seems to have taken root in the Romantic era, with the publication by the German philosopher Dietrich Tiedemann of *Observations on the Mental Development of a Child* (1787), a careful study of the progress of his son from birth to two and a half.<sup>2</sup>

The idea of a diary of an infant's progress was also introduced into pedagogic and child-rearing literature. Madame Necker de Saussure's *L'Éducation progressif* (1828–32), in which she recommended keeping a

diary of your child, was translated into English in 1835, with a sample baby diary by the translator. That same year, Elizabeth Gaskell, with Necker's text at her side, started a diary of her daughter, Marianne, then aged six months.<sup>3</sup> It is not in any sense a scientific diary. Dedicated to her daughter, 'as a token of her mother's love, and extreme anxiety in the formation of her little daughter's character', it is both a record of her development and a touching account of Gaskell's own worries as she struggles to bring up her child, haunted always by the fear of her possible loss and by the concern that by her own mismanagement she might damage her daughter's future character. She struggles with conflicting advice—'Crying has been a great difficulty with me. Books do so differ'—and worries about Marianne's passions, and that tears might betoken 'a morbid feeling . . . that for her happiness had better be checked'.<sup>4</sup> The emphasis throughout is on helping her daughter to control her passions and develop self-restraint. Interestingly, in light of the subsequent over-pressure controversy, she decides not to try any form of teaching until the age of 4, since a medical man had recently informed them that the brain of the infant until the age of 3 'appeared constantly to be verging on inflammation, which any *little* excess of excitement might produce'.<sup>5</sup>

A diary in similar vein was kept from 1837 by Sophia Holland, Gaskell's cousin by marriage, recording, with rather less anxiety and more celebration of mischief, the first few years of the life of her son, Thurston.<sup>6</sup> Darwin, who was also a relative of Holland and Gaskell, was not then alone in his endeavour to chronicle in his notebook of 1838 the development of his child.<sup>7</sup> The document he produces, however, is of a very different genre. As I noted in the Introduction, at the time that Darwin originally composed his diary, he was also engaged in making the first steps towards his theories of evolution in his other notebooks. With the birth of his first son, William, he started a notebook which he would maintain for four years, recording the development of his children.<sup>8</sup> The diary is not a record of parental anxiety but rather a precise observational study of the physiological processes of development, noting sensitivity to touch and tickling or the function of hic-coughing. Thus crying figures not as a cause for concern but as part of an analysis of physiological process: 'I find bad crying, chiefly connected with resperative function.'<sup>9</sup> Emma Darwin later starts to add her own entries to the diary, but these are more focused on interesting sayings and responses than the details of physical development.

Although Darwin started, in 1839, to collect details of infant development from his relatives with young families,<sup>10</sup> his study of infant life was to wait even longer than his theory of species for publication: it provided material for *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872), but was only published in its own right in the journal article of 1877. In part this reticence to publish can be explained by the fact that interest in the development of babies was regarded culturally as a female domain, and science had not yet established an authoritative presence in this area. The history of the rise of child development as a recognized field of science is one that can only be told as part of a wider cultural and social history, embracing not just the world of high science but popular journalism and domestic politics as well. Two key figures in this regard are George Eliot's partner, G. H. Lewes, and their younger friend, James Sully.

One of the first detailed English explorations of infant development appears not, as one might expect, in a medical or scientific periodical, but rather in an 1863 article by G. H. Lewes on 'The Mental Condition of Babies', published in that general fiction-oriented family periodical the *Cornhill*, started under the editorship of Thackeray in 1860 (and run under Lewes's own guidance between 1862 and 1864). At this point in his career, Lewes, who had started life as critic, novelist, and author, was in the process of consolidating his emerging reputation as a scientist following the publication of his work on physiological psychology, *The Physiology of Common Life* (1859–60). His article, however, hovers uneasily between the fields of high science and popular debate. The subject was a review of a tract by Dr Kussmaul of Erlangen who was the first, Lewes claims, to have examined this question in a scientific spirit.<sup>11</sup> The book was not reviewed in the *Lancet* or the *British Medical Journal*, and Lewes no doubt first encountered it in his extensive reading of German medical and scientific periodicals.<sup>12</sup> The subject itself, as I have suggested, was not one that would attract much attention from the British scientific world until the late 1870s. Lewes thus had to negotiate the dual difficulties of writing for a general audience and reporting on a new potential field for scientific inquiry. Whilst appearing to treat the research seriously, Lewes nonetheless adopts a comic and facetious tone: his instincts as a scientist are clearly being undermined by his own uneasy relations to his potential audiences. One of the problems he faced was how to introduce a field of science which undermined disciplinary and customary spatial boundaries by taking place not in the well-equipped laboratory but in the traditional female sphere of the nursery.

Lewes's choice of title signals his divided loyalties, with the high-flown scientism of 'mental condition' linked with almost comic bathos to 'babies'. For Kussmaul's neutral term 'new-born' he has chosen to substitute the alliterative 'baby', which captures in its very sound the early babblings of an infant and carries an almost defiant non-scientific tone. (Darwin, and virtually all subsequent medical and psychological tomes, opt for the more emotionally neutral terms of 'infant' or 'child').<sup>13</sup> Lewes opens his article with comic depictions of men and women disputing over a baby's cradle, the mothers' claims for their adored ones' achievements being met by scepticism and 'combative opinionativeness' from the males. Science, however, will settle all, Lewes decrees, for Dr Kussmaul has sought to resolve these issues 'by making new-born infants subjects of *experiment*'.<sup>14</sup> Anticipating the 'voluble execrations of outraged womanhood' in response to such an idea, Lewes places Kussmaul's work in the context of his own:

Experiment on babies! We remember that, in a communication we submitted to the British Association for the Advancement of Science, the mention of experiments performed on sleeping children was not very well received by some mothers, although the experiments carried with them no operation more formidable than tickling the sleepers' cheeks. The sanctity of the infant was felt to have been violated! Perhaps, also, the experiments being mentioned in conjunction with others on decapitated frogs and salamanders, the timorous imagination at once conjured up visions of remorseless physiologists decapitating babies to detect the laws of nervous action.<sup>15</sup>

Unfortunately, no records survive of these outraged mothers, but the material which formed the basis of Lewes's communications to the BAAS is to be found in *The Physiology of Common Life*, where he does indeed pass directly from describing his experiments on lively decapitated frogs to those of tickling sleeping infants' cheeks. He concludes:

If any one will institute a series of such experiments, taking care to compare the actions of the animal before and after decapitation, he will perceive that there is no more difference between them than between those of the sleeping and the waking child.\*

\*[Lewes's footnote:] It is better simply to remove the brain, than to remove the whole head, which causes a serious loss of blood.<sup>16</sup>

Whilst Lewes is undoubtedly correct in asserting that no harm is threatened to the infants, the linguistic associations are powerful, particularly those summoned up by that final unfortunately placed footnote. Lewes's own

language and syntax erase distinctions between tickling and decapitation, or between babies and frogs. As readers, however, we are clearly expected to participate in the amused condescension he extends to these irrational mothers who set emotions before science. Although obliged to address, however obliquely, disturbing questions as to the precise relationship between babies and animals, and scientific entitlement with regard to experimentation on both humans and animals, Lewes tries his best to deflect such issues through the use of humour.

Dr Kussmaul's experiments, although presented as entirely innocuous, are more extensive and intrusive than Lewes's own. Newborn babies, including those who were premature, were subjected to a series of tests on their senses, including bitter and sweet tasting substances dropped on their tongues before they had sucked, and in the case of one unresponsive child, acid. With regard to hearing, Lewes agrees with Kussmaul's remarkable conclusion that this 'is the only one of the special senses in which the infant seems absolutely deficient'. Centuries of female experience is to be set aside on the authority of male science (and indeed subsequent studies in the 1880s happily take this scientific proclamation of infant deafness as their starting point).<sup>17</sup> Did 'voluble execrations' reach the offices of the *Cornhill* or were female readers suitably cowed by this scientific dismissal of the 'superfluous solicitude of mothers and nurses "not to wake baby"?'<sup>18</sup> Behind these assertions lie the gendered politics of domestic space: considerations of the nursery are not to impinge on the masculine study. Using the twin techniques of lofty assertion and comic ridicule, Lewes seeks to press forward the claims of baby science. His strategies, however, help to highlight the uncertain authority of the male in this gendered domain. As a doctor supervising pregnancy and infant care, the scientist's word might be law—but could he retain his dignity if he stooped to tickle babies' cheeks? And would women willingly relinquish their sway over the nursery in favour of masculine science?

Lewes's semi-comical scenario of cold-hearted male experimenters clashing with female vessels of sympathetic emotion anticipates the vivisection debates of the 1870s, when women did seek to challenge the authority of masculine science, and Lewes, alongside Darwin, testified to the scientific need for vivisection.<sup>19</sup> Lewes attempts, facetiously, to disarm female opposition by claiming that science, which is represented throughout as female, will vindicate mothers' claims about their wondrous offspring. He calls on 'the mothers of Cornhill, and its "circumambient parishes"' to offer a ready

ear to scientific research.<sup>20</sup> His conclusion, however, rather surprisingly takes a sudden swerve into mystical Idealism, with extensive quotation from Wordsworth and his Platonic vision of the child ‘trailing clouds of glory’ from a previous existence.<sup>21</sup> Lewes’s uncertain relation to his subject matter and audiences is reflected in this dramatic narrative shift. The poetry functions, however, as a way of decontaminating, or sanctifying, the whole question of baby experimentation at the same time as subtly aligning psychological theories of evolutionary descent with those of the most respected representatives of high moral culture.

Although Lewes opened up an area for experimentation and debate no English scientists rushed into the breach; the light-hearted tone, and the article’s placement in the family-orientated *Cornhill*, militated against any serious scientific response. Evolutionary discussions seemed content to stop with the homological structures displayed in the embryo, or with large generalizations about the shared characteristics of children and primitive races. Even in Darwin’s *Descent of Man* (1871) there is a surprising absence of any sustained discussion of infant behaviour, whilst *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872) draws only intermittently on the observations he had made of his own infants—the development of smiling, laughing, frowning, weeping and, most importantly, screaming, for which he commissioned a series of plates (Fig. 11.1).<sup>22</sup> The disruption of domestic peace is given an evolutionary explanation in his observation that, whilst the habits of laughing and weeping are gradually acquired, ‘The art of screaming, on the other hand, from being of service to infants, has become finely developed from the earliest days’.<sup>23</sup> Science can explain, if not contain, the infant.

Baby study in its own right seems to have received no real attention until the foundation of the scientific journal *Mind: A Quarterly Review of Psychology and Philosophy* in 1876, designed as the first British journal devoted to mental science. The contents list of the first issue reads like a roll-call of authorities in the field, including Herbert Spencer on ‘The Comparative Psychology of Man’, and articles by both Lewes and Sully.<sup>24</sup> In the second volume, the editor Croom Robertson published a translation of Hippolyte Taine’s brief article ‘On the Acquisition of Language by Children’, republished from the French journal *Revue Philosophique*, which had been instituted in the same year as *Mind*. The article was based on a study of just one child, who was used by Taine to confirm the identification of primitive cultures and child mentality. ‘Speaking generally’, he concluded, ‘the child



Figure 11.1. 'The screaming and weeping of infants'. Charles Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872), Pl. 1, facing p. 148. Courtesy of the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, shelfmark: 09.G00021

presents in a passing state the mental characteristics that are found in a fixed state in primitive civilisations.'<sup>25</sup>

The article, carrying with it the authoritative intellectual imprimatur of *Mind*, spurred Darwin into action. He returned to the journal he and Emma had kept of their firstborn, William, thirty-seven years before, and rapidly produced an article which he sent, unsolicited, to Croom Robertson. It was published as 'A Biographical Sketch of an Infant' in the very next issue. The labour involved here for Darwin was not insubstantial—chronological jottings were transformed into a developed argument under subject headings, including 'Anger', 'Fear', 'Association of Ideas', 'Moral Sense', and 'Means of Communication' (and in the process most of Emma's contributions



were excised).<sup>26</sup> There were a few observations on parallels between infant and animal behaviour in the original version, and these were developed and placed in an evolutionary frame so that, in one case, anxious parents could actually take comfort from notions of hereditary transmission. On visiting the Zoological Gardens, William experienced real fear when seeing the 'beasts in houses'. Darwin noted: 'May we not suspect that the vague but very real fears of children, which are quite independent of experience, are the inherited effects of real dangers and abject superstitions during ancient savage times?' His explanation bypasses completely the category confusion identified by William, and turns instead to the idea of inherited memories in order to offer parents a reassuring account of the seemingly irrational behaviour of their offspring. Interestingly, Darwin transformed the parallel in the original, which was that of 'young mice trembling at a cat the first time, they see one' to that of 'savage times'. The later version neatly encompasses the possibility either of animal descent, or the child's embodiment of the early stages of human life in its 'savage' state. Darwin's frame of reference is here very different from that of Kussmaul; the infant is to be studied not in its own right as a developing organism but as an expression of a buried historical past. His observation, however, points to the ways in which evolutionary theory, as it emerged in popular writing, became a way of explaining to anxious parents the inalienable difference of the child. Far from being a disturbing image, the idea of animal descent could act as a positive framework for interpretation and understanding of the disturbed or disruptive child.

Darwin was very diffident towards, and seemingly almost embarrassed by, this article. He expressed surprise that *Mind* would actually want to publish it, and when beset by requests from France and Germany for permission to translate it, he repeatedly stated that it was not worthy of such attention.<sup>27</sup> The combination of Darwin's name and the intellectual prestige of *Mind* proved irresistible, however: 'baby science' was now set firmly on the scientific agenda. The article also placed Darwin in correspondence with Wilhelm Preyer in Germany, who had already started work on infants and whose *Die Seele des Kindes* (1882) was to become the definitive work in the field for some time. Preyer, Professor of Physiology at Jena, had kept a careful record of the development of his son from birth to the end of his third year, scrupulously observing him three times a day. His analysis of this data was supplemented, however, by accounts of laboratory experiments on guinea pigs, chickens, and other animals, and it would seem, on other infants. He recounts, for example, his conclusion that babies in the process of being born could

experience both pleasure and pain, for ‘when I put into the mouth of the screaming child, whose head alone was as yet born, an ivory pencil or a finger, the child began to suck, opened its eyes, and seemed, to judge from its countenance, to be “most agreeably affected”’.<sup>28</sup> The scientific development of the ‘baby diary’ went hand in hand with experimentation which could commence even before the moment of birth. Preyer also repeats many of Kussmaul’s experiments, whilst also drawing on the evolutionary framework outlined in Darwin’s *Expression of the Emotions*. Preyer notes, with reference to reflex movements, that a comparison of the reflexes of chimps, oranges, and Negro children would perhaps disclose no difference (a comparison which keeps in play the notion that the Negro child is of an evolutionary lower form than the European baby), and later cites Darwin’s parallels between a cross child and a chimpanzee, and the act of laughing in monkeys and children. He confirms Darwin’s argument that laughing occurs later than crying, because crying is of more use to the infant.<sup>29</sup>

Following Darwin’s article, the pages of *Mind* carried a flurry of articles on infant development,<sup>30</sup> so much so that Joseph Jacobs could claim in 1886 that ‘Observation on children’s minds, as attempted by Charles Darwin, has almost grown into a separate study, to which the apt name of Baby-lore has been given’.<sup>31</sup> The dominant figure in this field in England was James Sully, who reviewed Preyer’s *Die Seele des Kindes* for *Mind* in 1882.<sup>32</sup> Although his major work, *Studies of Childhood* (itself a compilation of general periodical articles), was not published until 1895, he had staked his claim by the early 1880s. A scholarly review of an earlier Preyer article in *Mind*, 1880, was followed by a popular article on ‘Babies and Science’ for the *Cornhill* in 1881, which in many ways looked back to Lewes’s earlier piece.<sup>33</sup> Like Lewes, who became his friend and semi-patron, Sully, who also had an early background in the arts, was attempting to establish a scientific career in psychology while financing himself through writing for popular journals.<sup>34</sup> Following Lewes’s pattern, he opens ‘Babies and Science’ with a light-hearted depiction of the battle between the sexes over the cradle—female ‘baby-worship’ is once more set against male indifference and even contempt. Science, Sully suggests, will now change all this for it has become ‘a champion of the neglected rights of infancy’ and hence will become for women the ‘avenger of a whole sex’.<sup>35</sup>

Sully’s interest in babyhood is primarily evolutionary. ‘The attentive eye’, he observes, ‘may . . . find in seemingly meaningless little infantile ways hints of remoter habits and customs of the human race’. Masculine science is to

rescue infancy from ‘meaninglessness’ by transforming babies into palimpsestic records of past civilization. Such interest, Sully suggests, has led to the creation of a new breed of scientific father: ‘The tiny occupant of the cradle has had to bear the piercing glance of the scientific eye. The psychological papa has acquired a new proprietary right in his offspring; he has appropriated it as a biological specimen.’<sup>36</sup> Although the alliteration casts the proprietorial ‘psychological papa’ in a humorous light, the article works, finally and unevenly, to establish baby science as a serious male domain. Science herself is portrayed as female, luring the male to the cradle, but scientific practice is to remain resolutely male.

The domestic dynamics are those captured in the *Punch* cartoon of 1 April 1871, ‘A logical refutation of Mr. Darwin’s theory’, responding to the publication of the *Descent* (Fig. 11.2). The man is placed ingratiatingly at the woman’s feet, book in hand, as he attempts to convince his wife of the



Figure 11.2. ‘A logical refutation of Darwin’s theory’. *Punch*, 1 April 1871, p. 130. Courtesy of the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, shelfmark: N. 2706 d. 10

truth of Darwin's theories. The domestic cat, an alternate embodiment of our common ancestor, 'a hairy quadruped with pointed ears and a tail', looks on, envying the place occupied in the woman's warm lap by the child. The woman's superior response, with its lofty rejection of all things animal, demonstrates her inferiority, as hugging the child more tightly to her, she repulses this invasion into her domain of both man and science.<sup>37</sup>

Women, Sully notes in his article, at first pleased by the man's new interest in the infant, become alarmed 'when the rash enthusiast for science proposes to introduce the experimental method as superior to that of passive observation'. Mothers impede the progress of science if they too become 'infected with the scientific ardour of the father' since none of their observations, coloured as they must be by maternal instincts, can be trusted. The nurse too becomes an 'invincible obstacle' to scientific progress and 'may succeed in barricading the cradle against [the father's] scientific approaches'.<sup>38</sup> Intellectually and physically women stand in the way of baby science.<sup>39</sup>

Sully concludes the paper with a thinly veiled account of his observations of his baby son, who was born the previous year. Although modelled on Darwin's pattern established in *Mind*, even this part of the paper is comic in tone, poking fun at the abstruser musings of the father with regard to his son's connection to primitive human history.<sup>40</sup> The 'psychological papa' is viewed through the eyes of the sceptical wife, but without ever fully undercutting the value of his work. Sully's divided attitude to childhood studies, and his own role therein, which emerges so strongly in this article, is also expressed in his further periodical writings in the 1880s on the subject. These are strictly divided between serious scholarly reviews of childhood research in *Mind* and what Sully termed 'lighter' pieces in a range of journals including *Longmans'*, the *English Illustrated Magazine*, and *Baby*.<sup>41</sup> Uncertainties about his own professional position, and the scientific dignity of the area itself, no doubt contributed to the long delay between his early interest in developmental studies and the final publication of *Studies of Childhood* in 1895, which brought together many of his periodical pieces.<sup>42</sup>

The gender-inflected concerns over questions of scientific authority in the emerging area of baby science parallel in many ways the battles that had recently been fought between midwives and doctors. A civilization, W. Tyler Smith declared in the *Lancet* of 1847, should be judged on how well it treats its women. Despite appearances, this was not a statement supporting

the cause of midwives but the very reverse. True respect for womanhood, according to Tyler Smith, could only be shown if the incompetent midwife was banished from the lying-in room, to be replaced by the omni-competent male physician.<sup>43</sup> Similar struggles were being repeated in the domain of the nursery and the pages of the popular periodical press as male scientists sought to usurp a traditional area of female knowledge. Science would become the 'avenger' of women, but only if they agreed to relinquish their observational role in the nursery to men. Such arguments were particularly difficult to make, however, if scientists earned their keep by writing for periodicals aimed at both a male and female audience, not just a closed male fraternity, and were also dependent on women for their data.

## Experiments on Babies

The rise of scientific interest in the baby had its parallel at the other end of the cultural spectrum in the emergence of a rather different phenomenon: the baby show. In July 1869 the first major baby show was held in England in Woolwich, following recent successful shows in America organized by the showman Barnum. It drew extensive press coverage, including a lengthy, lightly satirical piece in *Household Words*. The prizes were substantial, between £10 and £15, and apparently 2,300 mothers descended on London from all over the country, desperate to be among the lucky 120 to be exhibited for four days in a hot, smelly tent. The writer draws the inevitable parallels with livestock shows: there, behind the railings, ‘looking disagreeably like pigs in their pens, sat the mothers holding their infants’.<sup>1</sup> Whilst other reports railed against the general indignity, and the indecency of public suckling, this writer concludes that this is not really an issue since most of the spectators paying their 1 shilling entrance fee were themselves lower class, and the mothers and babies themselves probably experienced better conditions for the four days than their usual squalor at home. He finishes by musing on whatever next, perhaps a married couples show, only to discover that one had already been advertised: ‘But will any married couples consent to exhibit themselves for such a purpose? Without doubt, dozens.’ Contemporary concerns with reference to reality TV, and how far it will descend in its experimental use of subjects, clearly had their antecedents in Victorian culture. The writer concludes: ‘The mania for this sort of show will have its day, and will go much further. There are thousands of persons ready to run wildly after every new thing, and to run all the more wildly if it be suggested that the new thing is rather improper.’<sup>2</sup>

The emergence of the baby show as a disturbing cultural phenomenon occurred at the time of the very height of concern about ‘baby farming’, and newspapers and periodicals were quick to pick up on the parallels.



Figure 12.1. 'The Baby Farmer', *The London Journal*, 1 November 1869, p. 280. Courtesy of the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, shelfmark: Per 256 c. 3

Middle-class mothers were drawn into the net, for, as an article in the *Saturday Review* remarked, the classes of society 'which would be shocked at being asked to contribute to a baby show are able to support a baby farm', and middle- and upper-class children thus 'die at nurse when they are not wanted'.<sup>3</sup> As the illustration from the *London Journal* (1869) highlights (Fig. 12.1), the outwardly respectable figure of middle-class womanhood was equally implicated, drawn together with the unsavoury figure of the working-class nurse, in her willingness to add her child to the row of death's heads at this farm. While the scandal focused on infant deaths, rather than exhibition, the fiercely pejorative use of the term 'farming' drew attention to the ways in which babies were treated as mere livestock, although in this case 'livestock' itself is a misnomer, since the 'farmers' concerned had little interest in the survival of their charges.

The *Lancet*, which had led a vigorous campaign against baby farming, also weighed in against the iniquities of the baby show. The writer picks up on

the Darwinian implications for breeding. Whilst appalled by the indecency and threat to health of the shows, he suggests that 'If those who preach on the virtue of having limited families wanted to enforce their tenets, these Baby Shows would supply the means; . . . if we require to restrain young people from indulging in love-making and marriage, a Baby Show ought to do it if anything could.' From the ugly spectacle of the baby show as a means of birth control, the writer moves straight to a eugenicist vision of the future:

we presume it is not intended to carry the Darwinian hypothesis into practice, or pursue the custom adopted by breeders of fancy pigeons or the featherless bipeds. We are scarcely warranted in killing ugly and diseased specimens, and pairing the fathers and mothers, regardless of all marriage ceremony or matrimonial bonds, so as to obtain fancy breeds of babies. The idea is nasty in itself; but what we saw of it has tended to show how nasty it may be practically.<sup>4</sup>

In the opening chapter of the *Origin*, 'Variation under Domestication', Darwin had of course drawn extensively on the practices of domestic breeding to establish the underpinnings of his theories. Although the *Descent of Man* was not published until two years after the *Lancet* article, speculation as to the implications for human breeding was rife. Darwin's cousin Francis Galton had published his first article on breeding and heredity in 1865, while 1869 marked the publication of his first book on the subject, *Hereditary Genius*.<sup>5</sup> The close associations between concerns with animal and human breeding, and between popular and specialist debate, are firmly displayed in the places Galton published: his work on twins was published first in the general periodical *Fraser's Magazine*, and then revised, developed, and extracted in the *Journal of the Anthropological Institute* and the *Live Stock Journal and Fanciers' Gazette*.<sup>6</sup> Baby shows highlighted the growing awareness that the dividing line between human and animal breeding was disturbingly narrow, and that the scientific principles developed with reference to animal husbandry might well be applied to human life.

The *Lancet* was not alone in fearing that the baby show might presage an attempt to obtain 'fancy breeds of babies'. The conservative *Saturday Review* denounced such shows as 'positively harmful in some senses and disgusting in all' whilst acknowledging, archly, that the visitor will be

brought to a proper state of anthropological humility, and be disposed to accept the theory of our poor relations and progressive development, and to shake hands with his cousin the gorilla without more ado. For a baby-show is simply an exhibition of animals of a certain kind; neither more nor less; and the truth had better be said of it at once.<sup>7</sup>



Both this article, and the one the following year, respond to the 'quasi-scientific' mode of presenting the show, with the catalogue giving ages and weights of babies, and the proprietor proclaiming that his mission is 'to cultivate in the minds of mothers that proper care of their offspring to which England owes so much of her characteristic greatness'.<sup>8</sup> The first article argues, however, that the prizes do not actually encourage a 'better breed of babies' for the judges 'do not write up the place of living, age, race, condition and food of the father and mother'. He draws back, nonetheless, from the potential implications for human breeding of this critique, observing that 'We presume no one would go so far as to advocate means like those adopted by pigeon-fanciers and stock-raisers'. Yet, his own predilections clearly lean towards the ideals later enunciated by the eugenicists:

Is there any power or law to deny the right of men and women to produce stunted, scrofulous, rickety offspring, year after year, for as long as nature allows? We know what we should do with animals in such cases, but we cannot do the same with men and women; and baby shows do not help us.<sup>9</sup>

Baby shows inspired, in these male observers, an overwhelming sense of disgust at the sheer physicality of the child; in part this was class based, giving rise to eugenicist fantasies, but it also brought in its train a reluctant acknowledgement of our shared animal origins. Massed babyhood seemed to reinforce the generic, seemingly subhuman, qualities of the infant. Comparisons with pigs abounded (bringing to mind the playful metamorphosis in *Alice in Wonderland* where the Duchess's baby turns, in Alice's arms, into a pig).<sup>10</sup> Racial comparisons were also invoked, as in the disturbing suggestion in the *Saturday Review* that exhibitions of horses, cows, and sheep were acceptable, but 'babies and pigs are intolerable. Like our friends the niggers, babies are preferable at a distance.'<sup>11</sup> In this airing of popular prejudice, we find the emotional grounding of the principle articulated in anthropology and evolutionary psychology, that the infant and child are at the same stage of development as the 'lower races'.

Like baby farming, the baby show was seen as an affront to human dignity in the scant respect it seemed to pay to the infant; the theoretic parallels Darwin established between animal and human life were given unsettling instantiation. Questions were raised as to the real differences between babies and animals: did infants in their pre-linguistic phase have much to distinguish them from animals? Indeed, as Lewes's experiments also suggested, were there any intrinsic differences between tickling a frog or a baby's cheek, or

between exhibiting a fat pig or a baby? Certainly the fears that breeds of 'fancy babies' might be created to compete in the shows seems to have had some grounding in fact. In 1899 the *Lancet* reported from Paris on a medical recommendation to ban baby shows, due to the unwholesome feeding to which babies were subject in order to achieve award-winning plumpness in exhibitions which 'too closely resemble exhibitions of fat animals'.<sup>12</sup>

Baby shows were the popular end of a shift in cultural attitudes and scientific practice which saw the child gradually emerge as a subject of scientific testing and experimentation. As early as 1872 Galton had drafted proposals to measure pupils in schools, from pauper and Board schools to the great public schools, and it was data from Marlborough College which led to his 1882 article on the need for an Anthropometric Laboratory.<sup>13</sup> Such a laboratory was subsequently set up at the International Health Exhibition in 1884, where Galton tested and measured 10,000 subjects, looking not only at height and weight but testing all the senses (apart from taste) and measuring, for example, reaction time and strength of pull and squeeze.<sup>14</sup> Anthropometric laboratories were also set up in a variety of public schools, while similar tests became a staple element of popular entertainment in local fairs and fetes through the twentieth century.<sup>15</sup> In 1884 Galton published *The Life History Album*, edited by himself on behalf of the Collective Investigation Committee of the British Medical Association, and designed to offer a record of health and development from birth. The 'Owner of the Book' was informed that 'This Album is designed to contain the Chart of your Life, and to be a record of your own Biological experience'.<sup>16</sup> The book inaugurated the new regime of measuring and statistically quantifying infant and child development which was to take hold in the 1890s, all in the service, for Galton, of securing information on heredity which would help to improve the human race. Despite Galton's fascination with the early stages of development, he appears not to have extended his more intrusive experimental tests into the domain of infancy (indeed, he wrote to Sully in 1880 regretting the fact that he did not have access to infants for experimental purposes).<sup>17</sup>

While Galton made child development the subject of endless statistical analyses, the question of the relation between the child and the animal, called so disagreeably to mind by the advent of the baby show, formed the basis of the emerging science of animal psychology. In the hands of Darwin's nominated heir in this field, George Romanes, this took the form, as I will show in the following chapter, of domestic monkey-keeping and intensive study of the monkey houses at London Zoo, grounded in

explorations of the relations between the mind of the monkey and that of the child.

Literary culture was also quick to respond to the new scientific interest in infant development. In *The Water-Babies* (1863), Charles Kingsley had brought Tom face to face with contemporary science in the figure of the great naturalist Professor Ptthmlnsprts, who is so caught up in his own theories he denies the evidence in front of his eyes when the water baby Tom is caught in his net.<sup>18</sup> The episode is used to ridicule many of the pretensions of science, with a wide range of targets, including the naturalist Richard Owen's rejection of human evolution on the grounds that only the human race has a 'hippocampus minor'—an argument transposed in the tale into the Professor's defence of the 'great hippopotamus test'.<sup>19</sup> In his 1886 illustrations for the tale, Linley Sambourne highlights the confrontation between science and infancy. Recognizable caricatures of Owen and Huxley, the great opponents in the evolutionary debates, are depicted staring possessively, and aggressively, at a figure of a naked Tom covering in a specimen bottle (Fig. 12.2).<sup>20</sup> Although Huxley is depicted as armed only with a magnifying glass, the context created by the emerging culture of



**Figure 12.2.** 'Professor Owen and T. H. Huxley examine a water-baby'. Charles Kingsley, *The Water-Babies: A Fairy Tale for a Land-Baby*, with one hundred illustrations by Linley Sambourne (1886; London: Macmillan, 1903), 69. Author's own copy; image courtesy of Oliver Christie

experimentation on infants, and indeed the vivisection debates in which he was, by this time, prominently involved, create a more disturbing reading. The preoccupations of the book are given a new graphic focus amidst the increased concern in the 1880s with babies as potential objects for scientific intervention.

Literary responses to the new scientific interest in the baby took a variety of forms. Fears of a new 'fancy breed of baby', as expressed in the responses to baby shows, are given comic instantiation in a 1887 story in *Macmillan's*, 'A Child of Science', in which a kindly middle-aged bachelor watching a fire in the street suddenly finds himself holding a baby. The baby, aptly named 'Eugenius', is possessed of a huge head and brains to match. He is 'no dimpled infant, gurgling and smiling at the ceiling like a fat bishop in ecstasy. He looked critically on the world, or lay thinking like a bottle-fed Galileo.'<sup>21</sup> As he grows, the child shows no emotions and is interested only in science and calculations, offering rational and logical explanations for seemingly helpful behaviour which, looked at with other eyes, seems more like plain selfishness. His adoptive father is blamed by the child for 'thoughtless philanthropy' in adopting him, thus encouraging 'improvident marriages, and the growth of population in a community already overcrowded'. In a revisiting of the over-pressure controversy, the doctor recommends that Eugenius must 'think of nothing', but of course he continues (including in his meditations thoughts on the nebular origin of the universe). He dies finally, whilst scolding his father for contemplating 'so unreasonable a form of expenditure' as that of his burial.<sup>22</sup>

It emerges that the child's nurse is actually his mother, who had run away from his father because he was a 'scientific man' and had wanted to use the child for an experiment: 'He dared not make it on any child but his own. No one need know if it failed. If it succeeded it might benefit millions of children yet unborn.'<sup>23</sup> Eugenius, it seems, was bred solely so that his father could have material for experimentation. In the comic denouement, Eugenius returns from the dead, where he is clearly undergoing a more balanced educational programme than he obtained on earth, and the scientist father, a form of 'Dr Faustus', worn out with thinking and regret, is reunited with his wife. The story playfully glances at a range of contemporary issues, from over-pressure to spiritualism. Although Dr Faustus is invoked, it is noticeable that no supernatural elements are involved in the creation of Eugenius. The story does not look back to Frankenstein, nor anticipate the excesses of Wells's Dr Moreau; rather, Eugenius is a child of bathos, created by normal

means simply because his father can think of no other way to obtain the experimental material he requires. In a domestic reworking of the Burke and Hare scandal, a body is brought into life with the express purpose of experimentation. The story shows no interest in those 'millions of children yet unborn' who might benefit; such a plea is clearly seen as a self-serving delusion of the scientific mind. Eugenius is thus the unfortunate product of natural processes, of a narrow over-developed intellect which is intensified in transmission. Through its comic framing the tale speaks to a number of contemporary concerns: that science might cease to differentiate between animal and human life, and that 'fancy new breeds' of babies might be created for unwholesome ends.

The question of the relationship between experimentation on children and animals is addressed far more seriously in Wilkie Collins's novel of 1883, *Heart and Science*, which features the cold, hard-hearted experimenter, Dr Benjulia, who at 'six feet six inches' is literally a monster of a man.<sup>24</sup> Written at the time of intense anti-vivisection controversy, the novel makes perfectly plain where its sympathies lie. Its arguments are complicated, however, by the Doctor's relationship with the 10-year-old girl Zo, 'a curiously slow, quaint, self-contained child' (p. 64). Blessed with a mother who is a form of malign Mrs Jellyby, obsessed not with overseas missions but with the wonders of science, Zo 'aged ten, is one of the unsuccessful products of the age we live in'. She is either 'incurably stupid or incurably perverse': 'Whether she might have been over-crammed with useless knowledge, was not a question in connection with the subject which occurred to anybody' (p. 64).

In the figure of Zo, Collins combines two areas of contemporary concern: educational over-pressure and animal experimentation. She is not, however, a figure like Mr Toots, rendered idiotic by pressure, but rather a resistant presence in this modern culture, a 'quaint' relic whose childish, uninhibited speech and intuitive wisdom function as both comic relief and agency of redemption within the plot structure. Her comic prattle helps the heroine, Carmina, recover from hysterical paralysis, whilst her illiterate letter to the hero, Ovid, brings him to the rescue just in time. This is a novel dominated by nervous disorders; Ovid, a doctor, is suffering from overwork when first encountered, and collapses on a trip to the zoo under the additional strain of erotic emotion aroused by Carmina; the heroine herself suffers from hysteria, and even Zo's mother, the doughty Mrs Gallilee, has a breakdown and is placed in an asylum. Over all this chaos of the nerves looms the forbidding figure of Dr Benjulia, a secret vivisector, who works on nerves and the brain,

following the pattern of David Ferrier, whose trial for vivisection of a monkey had taken place amidst a great blare of publicity in 1881.<sup>25</sup> In keeping with anti-vivisectionist arguments, Collins portrays Dr Benjulia as a potentially great scientist whose feelings and responses have been corrupted by animal experimentation; he is willing, for example, to let the heroine die so that he can add to his stock of knowledge on brain disease. His only area of weakness appears to be in his curious, disturbing relationship with Zo, whose very name links her to the zoo where he obtains his monkeys for experimentation.

The question of the relationship between monkey and child, and between animal and human experimentation, is kept explicitly to the fore in the representation of Dr Benjulia's involvement with Zo. He is first encountered at the zoo, where he tends simultaneously to a sick monkey with brain disease and Ovid in a nervous collapse. Much is made of the symbolism of his big walking stick, which Zo, on recognizing him, 'took . . . into her own hands'. She runs away with it but returns, on his call, obeying him 'in an oddly indirect way, as if she had been returning against her will' (p. 95). There is a reluctant, erotic, almost mesmeric attraction between the scientist and child, who is explicitly an experimental subject. Alarming, Dr Benjulia's only joke in the entire novel is to compare himself to Herod: 'Herod was a Royal Jew, who killed little girls when they took away his walking-stick. Come here, child. Shall I tickle you?' (p. 96).<sup>26</sup> The idea of child slaughter becomes implicitly entwined with his practice of vivisection, whilst the tickling of babies' cheeks becomes now a far more intrusive, sexually charged interaction with a child. Zo agrees to be tickled, with a show of 'reluctant submission'. The 'tickling' itself is a physiological stimulation of the reflex nerves within the 'Cervical Plexus': 'He put two of his soft big finger-tips on her spine, just below the back of her neck, and pressed on the place. Zo started and wriggled under his touch. He observed her with as serious an interest as if he had been conducting a medical experiment' (p. 96).

Neither scientist nor subject can answer whether they enjoy the process, but they seem to become locked into a form of bond, which becomes for Dr Benjulia his closest approach to human intimacy. There is a sense in the text of the exploitation of the child, but also an element of sympathy for this scientist, who is so imprisoned within himself that this experimental interaction becomes his only form of release. He is reduced, in almost lovelorn fashion, to sending tickling by proxy, instructing the lawyer Mr Mool to find Zo when he visits Mrs Gallilee: "'Put your finger on her spine—here, just

below the neck. Press on the place—so. And, when she wriggles, say, With the big doctor's love'' (p. 220). Thoughts of Zo are for him intricately entangled with his practice of vivisection on monkeys. In his argument with his brother over the rights and wrongs of vivisection he maintains that he has to force himself to continue, but 'Knowledge sanctifies Cruelty':

'Have I no feeling, as you call it? My last experiments on a monkey horrified me. His cries of suffering, his gestures of entreaty, were like the cries and gestures of a child. I would have given the world to put him out of his misery. But I went on. In the glorious cause I went on. My hands turned cold—my heart ached—I thought of a child I sometimes play with—I suffered—I resisted—I went on. All for Knowledge! All for Knowledge! (p. 191)

In this defence, Dr Benjulia accepts the arguments of the anti-vivisectionists, that animals are like humans, and takes it one stage further, so that Zo herself becomes the imploring figure of the monkey he is dissecting. As protestors such as Lewis Carroll feared, it was a short step from animal to human experimentation: Dr Benjulia vividly imagines cutting up a favoured child.<sup>27</sup>

For Zo, Dr Benjulia becomes an incarnation of that symbol of masculine power, his stick. On his arrival at her house she once again seizes his stick and announces to Carmina the arrival of the 'big stick'. In a taut readjustment of power relations, Dr Benjulia becomes absorbed in Carmina as an interesting 'object of medical inquiry', whilst Zo demands a display of her own experimental potential:

'You haven't tickled me yet', she said. 'Show Carmina how you do it.'

He gravely operated on the back of Zo's neck; and his patient acknowledged the process with a wriggle and a scream. The performance being so far at an end, Zo called to the dog, and issued her orders once more.

'Now make Tinker kick his leg!' (p. 243)

Physiological experiment becomes a form of theatrical performance, while the patient, reversing the power hierarchy, takes charge. There is a worrying complicity here on the part of the child, who is willing to equate her own 'performance' with that of a dog, whilst the inappropriate sexuality of the scene is highlighted by her next command, 'Now tickle Carmina'. Such an act, performed on an adult female, would clearly breach all decorum. The 'unendurable infliction' of silence is broken by the rise of hysteria in Carmina; under 'nervous oppression' this quiet, refined young woman becomes loud, familiar, and bold, questioning the doctor about his fondness

for Zo. Sexual tension is passed in a contagious circle; the unconscious sexuality of the child, brought into being through experimentation, is expressed in the sexual hysteria of the young woman.

Collins is anxious to signal that Zo is untainted by her association with the Doctor. Thus she finds a more suitable love object in Scotland, in the shape of 'Donald', a piper on the estate, who 'takes snuff out of a cow's horn' and "'wears a purse and a petticoat; he never had a pair of trousers on in his life; there's no pride about him. Say you're my friend and he'll let you smack his legs'" (p. 314). From the dominating phallic male with his stick she turns to a deeply unthreatening lower-class male who constantly bows before the laird and wears a 'petticoat'. Instead of being the object of Dr Benjulia's physiological experiments, it is she who initiates physical contact, clearly finding pleasure in smacking the unseen Donald's bare legs. For a modern reader, the description, with its class condescension and unacknowledged focus on those free-hanging genitals, is scarcely less disturbing than that of Dr Benjulia's scientific ministrations. This representation of Zo clearly appealed to Victorian readers, however. As Swinburne commented, Zo was a 'capital child': 'her experiences of Scottish life and character . . . are nothing less than delicious'.<sup>28</sup> Her emerging sexuality is made safe, and finally contained within the home. She decides that her brother Ovid, who has overcome his initial feminizing prostration and returned from Canada a conquering masculine hero, able to rescue Carmina with his newly acquired medical knowledge, possesses a stick far superior to that of Dr Benjulia: 'Look at it, Papa! Benjulia's stick is nothing to this' (p. 316). Where Dr Benjulia had sported a rather exotic specimen of bamboo, in keeping with his own tainted eastern origins, Ovid carries a huge 'specimen of rare Canadian wood', from the pure air and unpolluted mountains of that new country (p. 316). To our post-Freudian eyes, the symbolism might appear crude and laboured; its exaggerated nature, however, draws attention to the ways in which Collins was struggling to accommodate perturbing associations between scientific experimentation and the child as a sexual subject.

Ovid's medical triumph (based on a medical manuscript acquired through an act of Christian charity, and hence without any experimentation) signals the downfall of Dr Benjulia. After one last visit to the schoolroom, where he tears out a scrap of Zo's writing and places it next to his heart, all the while longing to tickle her once more, he returns home and writes a will leaving all his possessions to her. He then shuts himself in his laboratory, slaughters some



of his animals, releases others, and, like a scientific version of the mad wife, immolates himself. On the surface the moral is clear: the innocent child has come closest to softening his hard heart, but the corruption of his soul by animal experimentation leads to his ultimate self-destruction. The association between the child and those animals whose death shrieks we hear is disturbing, however, reminding us that physiological experimentation could be far more intrusive than the mere stimulation of reflex responses. Zo did not die, like her animal counterparts, but her narrative importance rests on her pivotal position as 'slow' or even 'idiot' child, mediating between the animal kingdom and adult human intelligence.<sup>29</sup> Her innocence in the text is problematic. Scientific experimentation is represented, as I have argued, as a form of sexual exploitation which in turn awakens the unconscious sexuality of the child. The text forces us to re-evaluate our understanding of the Victorian fascination with the child woman, who is customarily represented as attractive because pre-sexual and hence unthreatening. Zo, by contrast, is a figure whose attractiveness, revealed under the pressure of scientific experimentation, is her very closeness to the physicality of the animal kingdom. Science unveils a highly sexualized child.

# 13

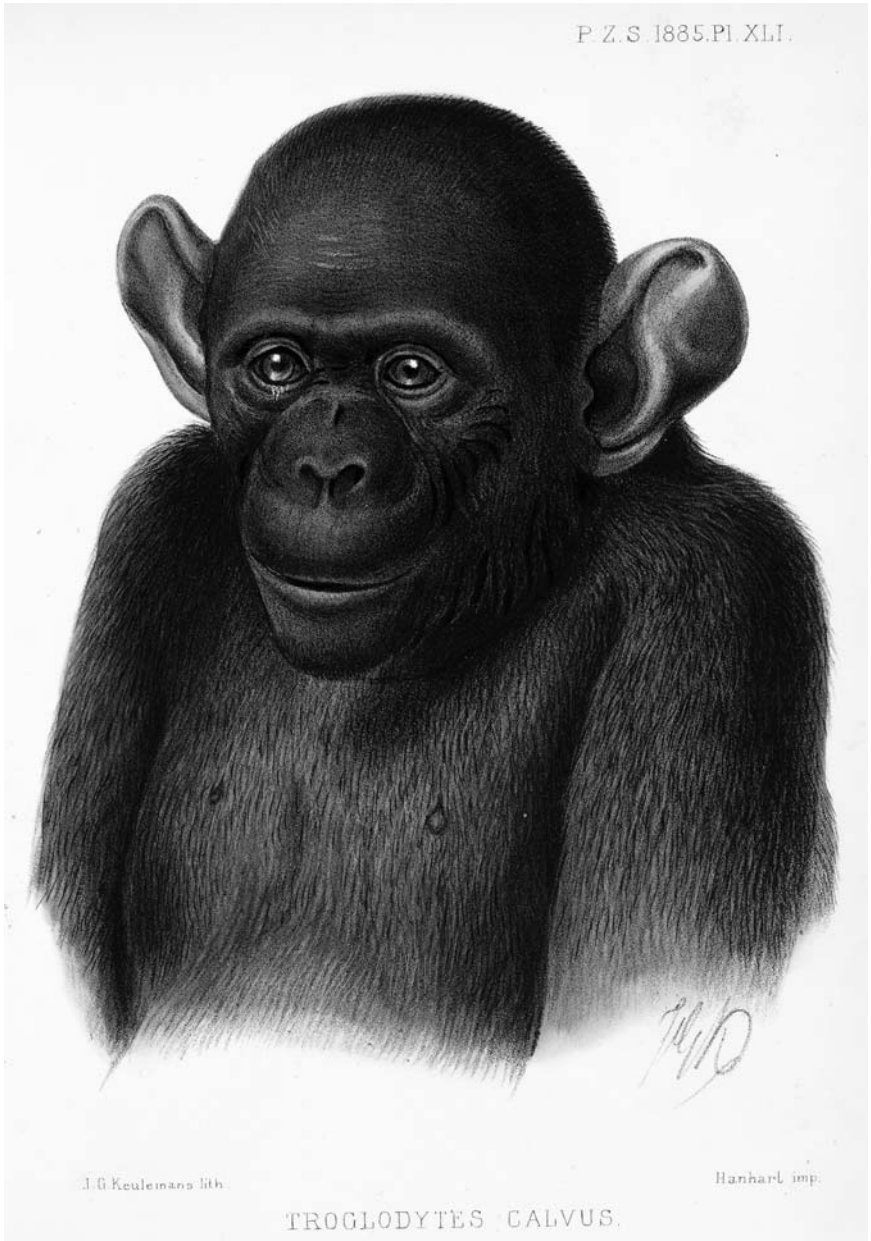
## Monkeys and Children

*H*art and Science, in its paralleling of the child and monkey as objects for experimentation, drew a rather grim picture of the relationship between science, the child, and the monkey. This chapter will explore, conversely, the ways in which fascination with the figure of the monkey in the post-*Origin* era entered more positively into popular constructions of childhood and the emerging interrelated fields of animal psychology and child development studies. The association between a child and a monkey was of course long established in popular culture before the advent of evolutionary theory. The use of the term monkey to describe a child dates back at least to the Elizabethan age, with parallels usually focusing on naughtiness and mischievousness. Monkeys were a familiar sight in Victorian streets accompanying organ grinders, whilst the keeping of monkeys had been an upper-class practice for centuries. Jessica, in *The Merchant of Venice*, famously exchanged her mother's ring for a monkey, whilst Farquhar in *Beaux Stratagem* (1707) nailed female pretension with deadly precision: 'She reads Plays, keeps a Monkey, and is troubled with Vapours.'<sup>1</sup> Domestic monkey-keeping appears to have been on the increase in the nineteenth century, supported by specialist dealers in London and Liverpool, whilst the founding of the Zoological Gardens in London in 1828, and the opening of its gates to the general public in 1846, offered innumerable opportunities for writers, naturalists, and the lay populace to meditate on the relations between human and simian life. Such opportunities were of course supplemented by travelling menageries and animal exhibits, such as Du Chaillu's stuffed gorillas, shown to such great acclaim in 1861.<sup>2</sup> Observations on monkey behaviour became a staple element in periodical writing in the second half of the century, from the popular reporting by the naturalist Frank Buckland on the domestic antics of his monkeys to the more high-brow accounts by George Romanes of his own

attempts at monkey-keeping and training. Monkeys in the Zoological Gardens, particularly the bald-headed chimpanzee Sally, pictured here (Fig. 13.1) in appealing human-style portrait, became national figures so that the *English Illustrated Magazine* reported in 1895 that she was possibly the 'most historic monkey' ever seen in Europe.<sup>3</sup>

Accounts of the pompous Bishop Wilberforce demanding to know whether Huxley was descended from an ape on his grandmother's or grandfather's side have tended to obscure understanding of the ways in which ideas of monkey descent could build upon popular acceptance of the monkey-child parallel. I turn, therefore, for my first example not to Darwin but to an article in the *Saturday Review* of 1869 entitled simply 'Boys'. It opens with the findings of physiologists that the Caucasian brain, even in its earliest stages, is equivalent to that of the adult Negro, and by childhood is 'on a level with that of the Mongol'. The writer proceeds archly to suggest that such findings will help answer the question that has puzzled parents and legislators from time immemorial: 'Why should that section of man's life commonly known as boyhood be distinguished by that bitter hostility to civilization and order which is only too frequently shown to be its leading characteristic?'<sup>4</sup> The true analogue, he suggests, is the Red Indian; not a noble savage but a 'whooping, screeching, tomahawking savage'. The article offers an unabashed celebration of the uncivilized nature of boyhood. For the purposes of 'boy-study', he declares 'we must not select a specimen cowed, subdued, stiffened, and made unnaturally gentlemanlike under the system of a Dr Blimber' but rather the natural article, who is hated by women since 'Women are conservative by temperament; boys are naturally revolutionary. Women are lovers of order; disorder in all its form is what boys love.' For a woman, a genuine boy is therefore nothing but a 'young monkey'. Although utterly playful in form, mirroring the anarchy it espouses, the article makes full use of theories of racial hierarchy and sexual prejudice in order to achieve its aim: a consecration of boyhood as a form of existence lying outside the bounds of civilization. It encapsulates contemporary ideologies of boyhood, in particular that dimension defined by an earlier article in *Fraser's Magazine*, as 'good, open, honourable naughtiness'.<sup>5</sup>

It is precisely these qualities which are to the fore in the naturalist Frank Buckland's popular accounts of the domestic mayhem created by his monkeys. His highly anthropomorphic descriptions are written with great affection. In 'My Monkeys', in *Temple Bar* (1868), for example, he notes

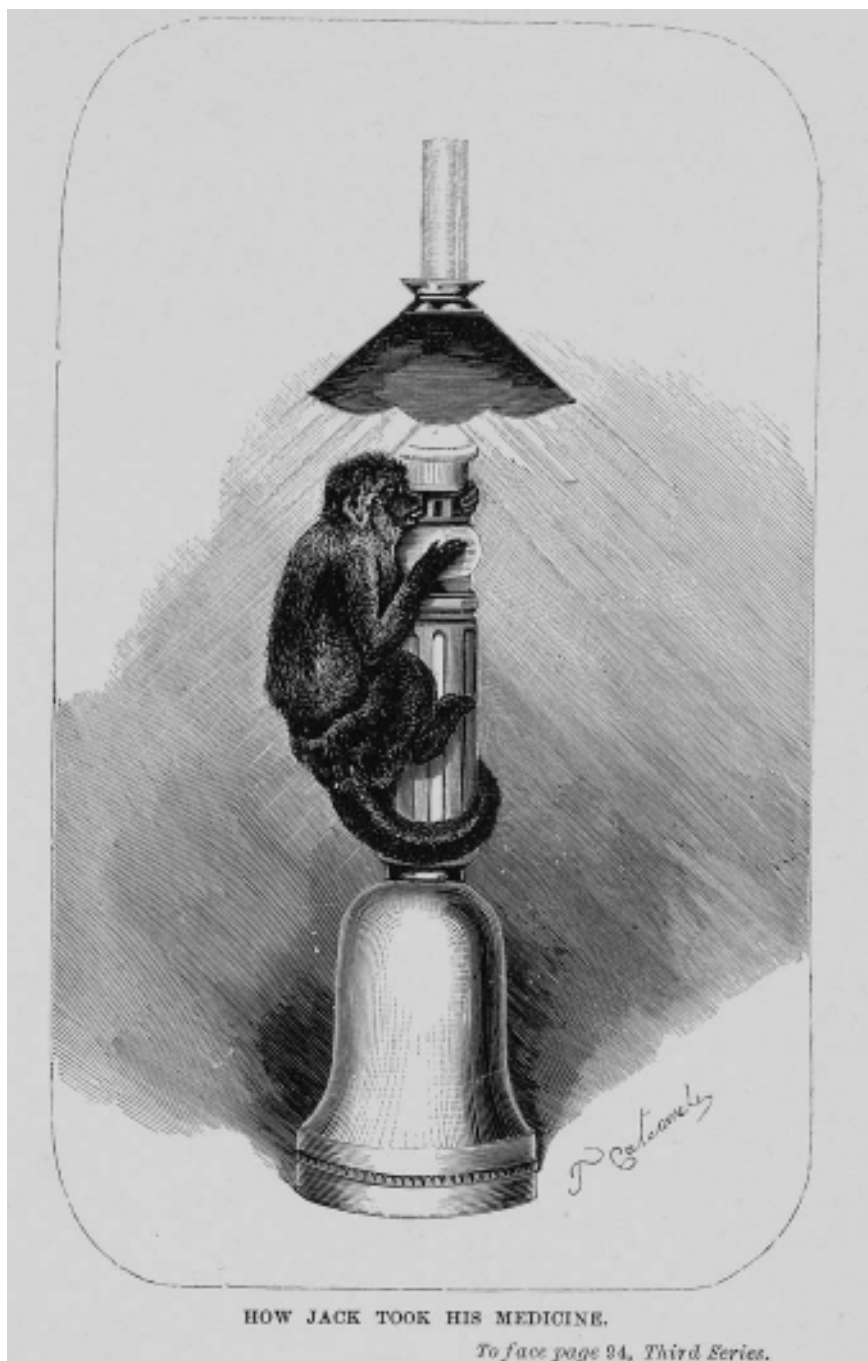


**Figure 13.1.** 'On a Female Chimpanzee now living in the Society's Gardens. By A. D. Bartlett, Superintendent of the Society's Gardens'. *Proceedings of the Scientific Meetings of the Zoological Society of London* (1885), p. 672, Pl. XLI, 'Troglodytes Calvus'. Courtesy of the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, shelfmark: Per. 18933 d. 124

that Susey and Jenny (otherwise known as ‘The Hag’) are more civilized than the monkeys in the Zoological Gardens; they are ‘really half-educated, and are almost fit to go up for a competitive examination’. The article could easily be an account of hyperactive schoolboys creating havoc within the home. These monkeys seem to have the ‘honest naughtiness’ so prized in boys: ‘there is not the least humbug about them. If they steal, it is only because it is their instinct to do so, and for the pure innate love of mischief, and nobody can blame them.’<sup>6</sup> They are also given human qualities of comprehension and empathy: ‘They understand every word I say, but at the same time are occasionally most disobedient; nay more, they understand my thoughts.’<sup>7</sup>

Although his writing appears to annul the distinction between human and simian life, Buckland was not a follower of Darwin. Son of the Revd William Buckland, author of the Bridgewater treatise on geology who was Canon of Christ Church, Oxford before becoming Dean of Westminster, he was brought up in an eccentric household, with animals running everywhere, and he continued the tradition. As a student at Christ Church he kept marmots, an adder, a jackal, and a bear, which he used to dress up in cap and gown and take to garden and boating parties until the bear was ‘rusticated’.<sup>8</sup> He trained as a surgeon, but from 1853, when his first paper on monkeys was accepted by *Bentley’s Magazine*, he embarked on an additional, prolific career in journalism, which ran alongside his work as army surgeon and later appointment as Inspector of Fisheries.<sup>9</sup> Through his journalism and books, which included appealing illustrations of The Hag, Jenny, Tiny, Carroty Jane, and Little Jack, Buckland turned his succession of monkeys into household names in England. With headings as in a novel, such as ‘Jack the Gold-Digger’ or ‘Jack takes his Medicine’ (Fig. 13.2), which illustrates how Jack could only be persuaded into taking his castor oil medicine if he believed he was stealing it from a lamp, the monkeys are constantly depicted as lovable but naughty children.<sup>10</sup> Like children, for example, they create a huge fuss when told to go to bed.

Anthropomorphism extends to the realm of clothing; readers of the *Leisure Hour* are advised that monkeys should wear ‘green baize jackets’, winter and summer, although rebellious Jack, who has been dressed by a regimental tailor, demotes himself to ‘Full Private’ by repeatedly pulling off his crown and stripes.<sup>11</sup> In a positive reversal of the activities of Dr Benjulia, Buckland recorded how he took a monkey ‘as good as dead’ from the Zoological Gardens into his home, feeding her anything she wanted, from



**Figure 13.2.** 'Jack takes his medicine'. Francis T. Buckland, *Curiosities of Natural History: Third Series* (1865; London: Macmillan and Co., 1900), 94. Courtesy of the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, shelfmark: 18933 e. 132

port wine to beef tea until she becomes ‘one of the most wicked, intelligent, pretty little beasts that ever committed an act of theft’.<sup>12</sup> This monkey is not sacrificed to science but nursed back to life, as an adored, spoilt child. The fame of Buckland and his monkeys was such that he was featured in *World* in 1878 as one of their ‘Celebrities at Home’. The article offers an affectionate account of domestic chaos as monkeys pulled hair out of a jaguar’s tail, a jackass chased mice, and a parrot summoned a taxi. The ‘master’s room’ had become the ‘monkey’s room’, which, as Buckland remarked, was “‘Darwin going backwards’”.<sup>13</sup>

Through his journalistic writings on monkey-keeping, which stretched from 1853 to his death in 1880, Buckland perhaps did as much as Darwin himself to affix in the popular mind the parallelism of monkeys and children. Although Buckland knew and corresponded with Darwin, frequently supplying him with information for his research, he was not a believer in evolution.<sup>14</sup> It is not until nearly the end of his life, however, that he addresses Darwinian theory directly in his writing, when he rejects it outright. A friend of the anti-Darwinian Richard Owen and a devoted son, he continued to subscribe, like his father, to the principles of natural theology. His reflections come in an article on ‘Mr Pongo the Gorilla’, who arrived at the Zoological Gardens in 1877 and with whom, Buckland notes, he had several ‘interviews’. Whilst he was there a boy and girl arrived, and began to play with him:

Gradually they fraternised, and began to play together after the manner of little children. Not being a child, I cannot enter into their funny sayings and doings about nothing at all. So these three, the little boy and girl and the gorilla, played together after their own childish fashion for nearly half an hour, and I made the children experiment on him with ornaments, handkerchiefs, &c.; but no—the ape’s brain could not understand the human. Pongo put everything in his mouth, and tried to bite it up.<sup>15</sup>

The passage starts by emphasizing the similarity of gorilla and child, who are placed equally at a distance from their adult observer, so the final assertion of difference is less than convincing (particularly since Buckland seems unaware that a young human child will also put everything in its mouth). Buckland insists on the absolute, final difference between the human and the simian: ‘I could not in fact help seeing what a vast line the Creator had drawn between a man and a monkey.’ Monkeys, he asserts, are utterly distinct from humans because they cannot imitate—a monkey will never

put a stick on a burning fire, although a 'half-grown baby' would do so. Yet, this suggestion runs counter to so much of his own previous work, and that of other writing on monkeys at this period, which stressed precisely their capacity for imitation. In his writings, Buckland accords a centrality to monkeys that is denied to humans. Although in principle a 'non-believer' in transmutation, the popular success of his writing depended, paradoxically, on his ability to persuade his readers that monkeys are exactly like lovable, mischievous (usually male) children.

In his famous conclusion to *The Descent of Man* Darwin observed:

For my own part, I would as soon be descended from that heroic little monkey, who braved his dreaded enemy in order to save the life of his keeper, or from that old baboon, who descending from the mountains, carried away in triumph his young comrade from a crowd of astonished dogs—as from a savage who delights to torture his enemies, offers up bloody sacrifices, practises infanticide without remorse, treats his wives like slaves, knows no decency, and is haunted by the grossest superstitions.<sup>16</sup>

The discourse is that of travellers' tales, while the rhetorical ploy is to denigrate non-European or 'savage' races in order to make the argument for animal descent more palatable. The tale of the 'heroic little monkey' comes from Darwin's discussion with a keeper at the Zoological Gardens who told him how a little American monkey, on seeing him attacked by a fierce baboon, 'rushed to the rescue, and by screams and bites so distracted the baboon that the man was able to escape', even though the monkey himself was normally 'dreadfully afraid' of the baboon. Darwin uses the incident, and that of the baboon who rescued a young one from a pack of dogs, as evidence that 'Besides love and sympathy, animals exhibit other qualities connected with the social instincts, which in us would be called moral'.<sup>17</sup> There is a slight hesitation there in the qualification 'which in us would be called moral', as Darwin seeks to avoid anthropomorphism whilst also suggesting that so-called moral actions in the human are but the result of social instincts inherited from animal life.<sup>18</sup> Darwin sides firmly with the anthropologists John Lubbock, E. B. Tylor, and John F. McLennan in rejecting the arguments of the Duke of Argyll and Archbishop Whateley that 'man came into the world as a civilised being, and that all savages have since undergone degradation'.<sup>19</sup> He adopts a firmly progressivist line: that man has gradually risen from a barbarous to a civilized state. Nonetheless, he chooses to conclude his work with that



emotively powerful contrast between the 'heroic little monkey' and the degraded, immoral savage.

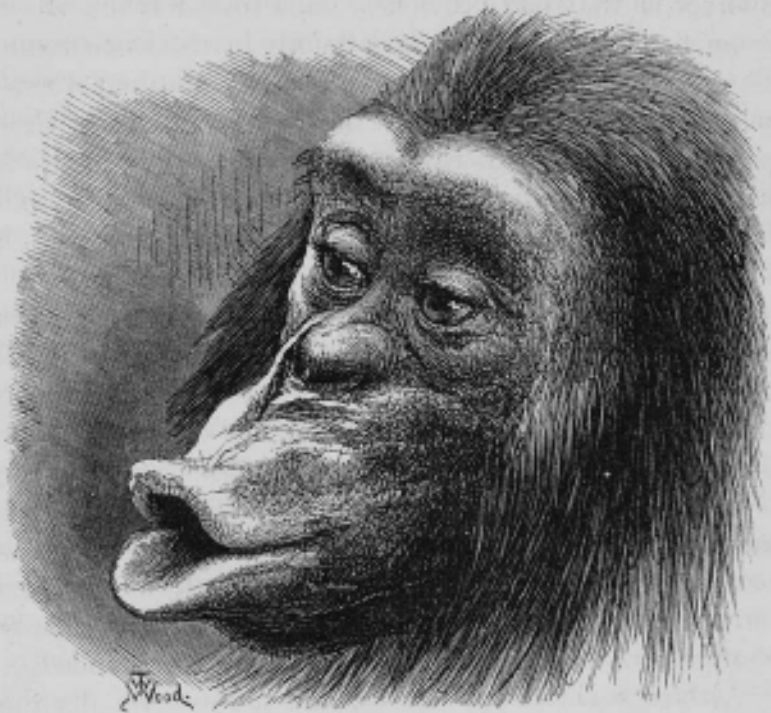
A similar construction is to be found two years earlier in the writings of Frank Buckland. Under the heading of 'A Clever Monkey', the *London Journal* reported Buckland's account of Jenny, the Andaman monkey recently acquired by the Zoological Gardens. She had served on board ship in the Abyssinian campaign, and been discharged with a silver medal. The account stresses both her cheekiness—she coolly seizes Buckland's cigarette, which she proceeds to smoke—and her capacity for hard work, concluding: 'The Andaman natives are said to be the most degraded of human beings. If Jenny is an average sample of the monkeys, we would sooner be a monkey than a man if nature had cast our lot in the far distant Andaman Islands.'<sup>20</sup> Buckland and Darwin both draw on the implicit assumptions in the popular reporting of the antics of monkeys and boys: in the 'good, open honourable naughtiness' of the middle-class boy or monkey, one finds the foundation of the English gentleman, as epitomized in Darwin's portrait of the 'heroic little monkey'. Both class and racial ideologies are operative here: the elision of human and simian life is achieved at the expense of its opposites: the degraded savage or his working-class equivalent. The boy or monkey might be a force for disorder in the middle-class home, but open naughtiness, or even stealing, is prized above that of sly or dishonest theft amidst the working classes or the immoral activities of the savage. The tale of the 'heroic little monkey', which passes quickly into popular repertory, draws its emotive power from ideologies of middle-class boyhood.<sup>21</sup>

In his subsequent work, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872), Darwin extended his research into the shared attributes of man and monkey in the domain of emotions. Like Buckland, he worked extensively with the monkeys in the Zoological Gardens, although he never kept them himself, commissioning drawings of monkeys to illustrate his text (as well as photographs of babies). Although the discussion is of the parallels between emotions in humans and animals in general, he pays particular attention to the relationship between the monkey and the child. 'The appearance of dejection in young orangs and chimpanzees, when out of health', he claims, 'is as plain and almost as pathetic as in the case of our children.'<sup>22</sup> While Darwin did not subscribe to Haeckel's dictum that 'ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny', he nonetheless proceeds on the general assumption that inherited primitive traits are revealed most clearly in

the young.<sup>23</sup> The form of analysis, however, is to take the known—the sulky, passionate, or angry child as revealed in the nursery—and to extrapolate backwards to the animal form. He notes that ‘A young female chimpanzee, in a violent passion, presented a curious resemblance to a child in the same state’. Darwin commissioned a picture of a ‘sulky’ chimpanzee in order to illustrate the parallels (Fig. 13.3). ‘The accompanying drawing’, he notes, ‘represents a chimpanzee made sulky by an orange having been offered him, and then taken away. A similar protrusion or pouting of the lips, although to a much slighter degree, may be seen in sulky children.’<sup>24</sup> Like the tale of the ‘little heroic monkey’, this illustration played a crucial role in subsequent popular debate, particularly in the field of childhood study, where it tended to stand duty as a metonymic expression of Darwin’s theories of the developmental relationship between the child and the monkey.

In the *Descent*, Darwin had argued that the difference in mind between man and the higher animals was one of degree rather than kind. The mental and moral faculties of man, he concluded, had gradually evolved: ‘That such evolution is at least possible, ought not to be denied, for we daily see these faculties developing in every infant.’ Evidence from the nursery is to offer the key to the historic development of mankind. He admits, however, to the general state of ignorance that surrounds the development of the infant mind: ‘At what age does the new-born infant possess the power of abstraction, or become self-conscious and reflect on its own existence? We cannot answer; nor can we answer in regard to the ascending organic scale.’<sup>25</sup> These questions lay at the heart of the child study movement in the 1890s, but were taken up most immediately by George John Romanes, often described as Darwin’s heir, since Darwin bequeathed to him all his notes on psychological subjects to aid his work. In a series of works in the 1880s, *Animal Intelligence* (1882), *Mental Evolution in Animals* (1883), and *Mental Evolution in Man: Origin of Human Faculty* (1888), he addressed questions relating to the development of mind in man and animals. Like Buckland, he was also a prolific writer for journals, reaching a very wide audience through this mechanism, although he tended to write more for the higher end of the market, in journals such as the *Nineteenth Century*, *Fortnightly Review*, and *Contemporary Review*, as well as more specialized work for *Brain* and *Nature*.<sup>26</sup>

Romanes was the first person to attempt to map the intellectual and emotional development of humans and animals onto a single scale.



Chimpanzee disappointed and sulky. Drawn from life by Mr. Wood.

Figure 13.3. 'Chimpanzee disappointed and sulky. Drawn from life by Mr. Wood'. Charles Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872), 141. Courtesy of the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, shelfmark: 09. G00021

The chart shown in Fig. 13.4, which formed the frontispiece of both *Mental Evolution in Animals* and *Mental Evolution in Man*, makes fascinating reading. The central developmental tree is strictly hierarchical, with developments in the emotional sphere ascending up through the social animals, to intervening 'partly human' forms through to the savage, and finally, at the apex, civilized man. In true Victorian fashion, the emerging forms of the will constitute the true backbone to human development, whilst in the sphere of intellect, the emergence into the human sphere is signalled by the development of reflection and self-conscious thought. The most contentious element is undoubtedly the scale of the 'psycogenesis of man', where human infant development is mapped against the points in the developmental scale achieved by other, presumably adult, forms of animal life. According to this scale, an infant of seven weeks has risen as high as the form of life exhibited by a mollusc—a thought which might upset those 'outraged' mothers parodied by Lewes even more than the thought of experiments on babies. The chart contains many bizarre suggestions, which point to the inherent impossibilities in the task as well as the evident need for more data on infant development. Thus recognition of persons is only logged at four months, when the infant reaches the equivalent development of a reptile, although reason is deemed to have emerged at fourteen weeks, and to have placed the infant on the level of higher crustacea. By contrast, the corresponding chart of emotional development appears to offer an accelerated model of progress. At its 'mollusc' phase of seven weeks, the infant is deemed capable of 'sexual emotions without sexual selection', although this is not an aspect of infant development which Romanes discusses in his texts. It seems that by fifteen months the infant is on a par with 'anthropoid apes and dogs', who are capable of the highest aspects of emotional development, 'shame, remorse, deceitfulness' and a sense of the ludicrous, whilst on the intellectual front they have acquired a capacity to use tools and an 'indefinite morality'. The chart, and accompanying texts, work to demonstrate Darwin's belief that there was no difference in kind between animal and human intelligence, only one of degree. Romanes establishes a sliding scale between human and animal life, with no absolute divisions. The corollary of this approach, however, is to locate the human infant in the pre-human sphere.

In order to demonstrate his theories, Romanes, like Buckland, took to monkey-keeping, publishing in *Animal Intelligence* what is possibly the first

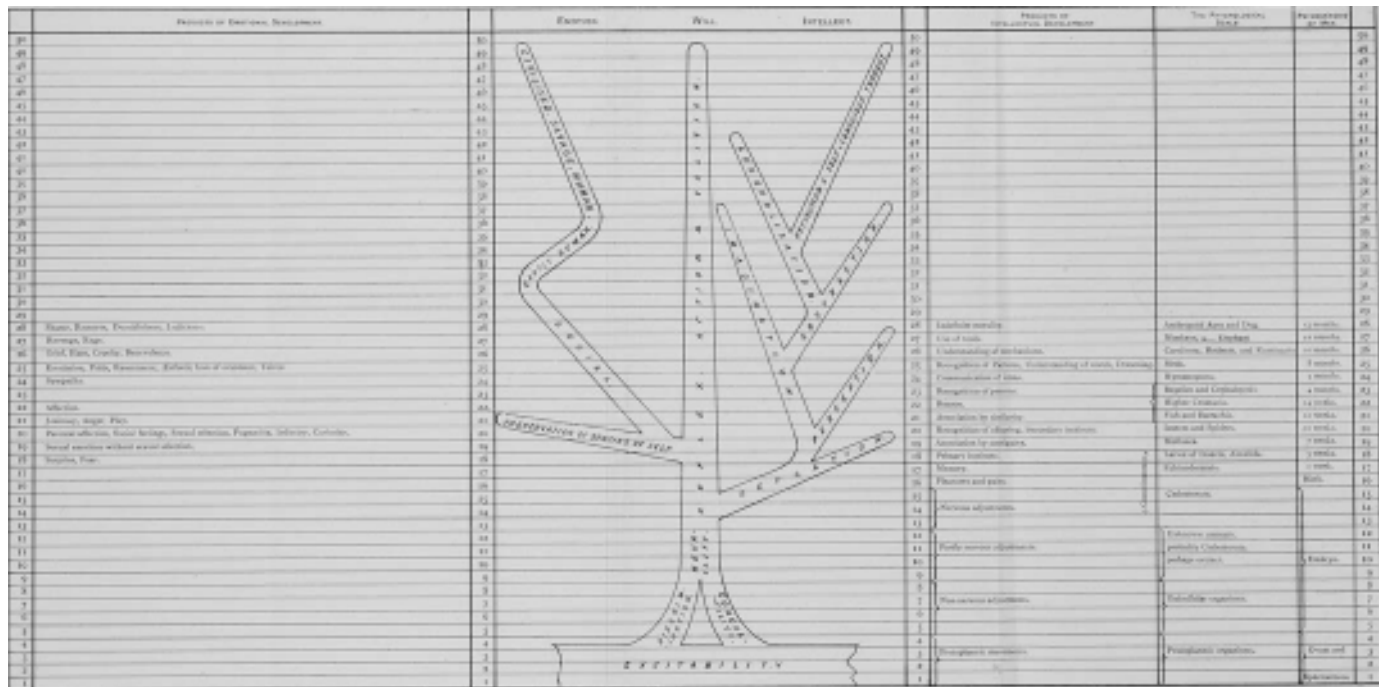


Figure 13.4. Chart of animal and human development. Frontispiece to George J. Romanes, *Mental Evolution in Animals* (1883). Courtesy of the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, shelfmark: 2646 d. 11

	PRODUCTS OF INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT.	THE PSYCHOLOGICAL SCALE.	PSYCOGENESIS OF MAN.		
50				50	
49				49	
48				48	
47				47	
46				46	
45				45	
44				44	
43				43	
42				42	
41				41	
40				40	
39				39	
38				38	
37				37	
36				36	
35				35	
34				34	
33				33	
32				32	
31				31	
30				30	
29				29	
28	Indefinite morality.	Anthropoid Apes and Dog.	15 months.	28	
27	Use of tools.	Monkeys, a... Elephant	12 months.	27	
26	Understanding of mechanisms.	Carnivora, Rodents, and Ruminants	10 months.	26	
25	Recognition of Pictures, Understanding of words, Dreaming.	Birds.	8 months.	25	
24	Communication of ideas.	Hymenoptera.	5 months.	24	
23	Recognition of persons.	Reptiles and Cephalopods.	4 months.	23	
22	Reason.	Higher Crustacia.	14 weeks.	22	
21	Association by similarity.	Fish and Batrachia.	12 weeks.	21	
20	Recognition of offspring, Secondary instincts.	Insects and Spiders.	10 weeks.	20	
19	Association by contiguity.	Mollusca.	7 weeks.	19	
18	Primary instincts.	Larvæ of Insects, Annelida.	3 weeks.	18	
17	Memory.	Echinodermata.	1 week.	17	
16	Pleasures and pains.		Birth.	16	
15	} Nervous adjustments.	} < Consciousness: >	} Cœlenterata.	15	
14				14	
13				13	
12				12	
11	} Partly nervous adjustments.	} Unknown animals, probably Cœlenterata.	} Embryo.	11	
10				perhaps extinct.	10
9					9
8	} Non-nervous adjustments.	} Unicellular organisms.	}	8	
7				7	
6				6	
5				5	
4	} Protoplasmic movements.	} Protoplasmic organisms.	} Ovum and	4	
3				3	
2				2	
1			Spermatozoa	1	

Figure 13.4. (Detail)

monkey diary. He borrowed a brown capuchin from the Zoological Gardens from December 1880 to February 1881. Since he had, he declares, no facilities for keeping it, he decided to quarter it on his sister, and more specifically in his invalid mother's bedroom, 'partly in order that he might be under constant observation, and partly also to furnish her with an entertaining pet'.<sup>27</sup> He does not record what she thought of this 'entertaining pet', who tore up whatever clothes it could get its hands on and threw a pot of coffee at the dressmaker. Suffice it to say that after three weeks the monkey was moved into the dining room, despite being made miserable by the change. The diary was actually written by Romanes's sister, and he is eager to reassure his readers that she was an utterly trustworthy observer, and he had himself verified many of the observations. One can trace, however, the same edgy gender struggles as emerge in the child study movement with reference to female observational competence. Romanes appends his own comments to the diary which offer a rather different picture—the monkey, according to this version, adored Romanes and hated his sister.

The thrust of the analysis is to show the high intelligence of the monkey, as it tried to open locks and unscrew appliances across the house. Contra Buckland's claims, it was very skilled at imitation and could also place things in the fire without being burnt. Its most striking feature was its 'tireless spirit of investigation'. As his sister comments in conclusion, 'when a monkey behaves like this, it is no wonder that man is a scientific animal!'.<sup>28</sup> Romanes moves on from this domestic experiment to work further with monkeys in the Zoological Gardens, most famously with Sally, the bald chimpanzee, whom he taught to count to 5. In his work on the relationship between the animal and human mind, he argues that what distinguishes the human from the monkey, or any other animal, is self-consciousness, but a child prior to its third year is not a 'self-conscious agent'.<sup>29</sup> In the initial period of life, there is no real difference between a child and a parrot—both use articulate signs. The child learns to talk in the same way as a parrot. The bird, however, is not capable of the further step in connotative extension—applying the word for dog, for example, to its picture. Romanes has no doubt, however, as to the skills of Sally in this regard:

The chimpanzee now at the Zoological Gardens, which I have taught to count as far as five, displays in a perfectly marvellous degree the power of understanding language—so that one can explain to her verbally what one wishes her to do, in just the same way as we explain this to an infant about eighteen months old. Therefore,

if this animal had been able to articulate, there can be no doubt that it would answer us in the same way that a child answers us when first emerging from infancy.<sup>30</sup>

For Romanes, it is only an ‘anatomical accident’ which prevents monkeys from speaking at the level of a young child.<sup>31</sup> He records how he took his 7-year-old daughter to see Sally at the Zoo:

On coming away I remarked to her that the animal seemed to be quite as sensible as Jack, ie her infant brother of eighteen months. She considered for a while and then replied, “Well, I think she is sensibler”. And I believe the child was right.<sup>32</sup>

Romanes’s work turned Sally into a major tourist attraction. An article on the Gardens in 1889 noted how her ‘portrait was affixed to a tree’, requesting visitors to visit her ‘reception-room’, where she was trained to ‘go through a series of amusing performances which display her intelligence’.<sup>33</sup>

The parallel between the mind of the monkey and the child lay at the heart of Romanes’s work. He drew increasingly on the work of Preyer, Perez, Kussmaul, and Sully on infant development, as well as on observations of his own children.<sup>34</sup> The key issue in all these debates was that of language. In a major intervention, Max Müller had published a series of articles in *Fraser’s Magazine* in 1873, ‘Lectures on Mr Darwin’s Philosophy of Language’, in which he had argued that language formed an impassable barrier between men and animals: ‘Certain it is, that neither the power of language, nor the conditions under which alone language can exist, are to be discovered in any of the lower animals.’<sup>35</sup> Müller’s article had inspired Taine’s ‘On the Acquisition of Language by Children’, which in turn spurred Darwin into the publication of his ‘Biographical Sketch of an Infant’. The development of the science of child study and of animal psychology were intricately interwoven.

Child study, as I will suggest in the next chapter, had its extreme edge, with various experiments devised to demonstrate the animal origins of the child. Similarly, in primate study, the idea that monkeys might be capable of language inspired the researches of Richard Garner, who announced, in the *New Review* of 1891, his discovery of a simian tongue.<sup>36</sup> As Gregory Radick has shown in his excellent work on Garner, his claims attracted huge media attention, both the inevitable spoofs in *Punch* and more serious treatments and critiques.<sup>37</sup> Popular engagement, for example, came in an article in *Harpers Weekly* (1891), ‘A Record of Monkey Talk’, which opens with an account of



Romanes's work with Sally and 'simian arithmetic' before describing how he was summoned to the New York Zoo to attend a 'conversazione between Mr Garner and the monkeys'. Garner's breakthrough was to use Edison's phonograph to try to record the monkeys. Having exhausted the possibilities of the New York Zoo, Garner was planning to head out to Africa to sit in a metal cage, recording unsuspecting monkeys in their natural habitat. Although the illustrations for the article are on the humorous side, Garner is portrayed fairly positively as a form of Jules Verne figure. Certainly his own reporting of his African sojourn in the *Pall Mall Magazine* (1894), 'Gorillas and Chimpanzees', takes up this line, portraying in heroic mode the dangers of his quest: 'in that frail fortress the close approach of one of those grim monsters [the gorilla] might well chill the blood and make any demon shudder'.<sup>38</sup>

Garner eventually has a gorilla, inauspiciously named Othello, who lives with him, but his affection is clearly reserved for his chimpanzees, especially Moses, whom he educates in table manners. He is one of his 'dearest and truest' animal friends, and the description of his death, with the devoted chimpanzee Aaron in attendance, rivals anything in Dickens for sentimentality: 'Dear little Moses! No one can ever know what comfort he afforded me during those lonely days and nights in that dismal land. No one can realise how much I loved him, nor how deeply I feel his loss.'<sup>39</sup> While the 'slave boy' who works for him is never dignified with a name, the chimpanzee takes on the role of Little Nell. As in Darwin's disparagement of the 'savage' in favour of the 'heroic little monkey', the native is here quietly disregarded in order to celebrate the bond of man and monkey, which for Garner was cemented by simian entry into the domain of language.

With its startling reverse symbolism of the man in the cage, and monkeys happily chatting into phonographs, Garner's work addressed contemporary fascination with the relationship between animal and child development. It evoked a range of responses, from positive endorsement to outright denunciation—he was christened the 'Munchausen of Monkey-land' in Henri Labouchere's crusading journal *Truth*<sup>40</sup>—and affectionate spoof. In the issue succeeding Garner's article, the *Pall Mall Gazette* published the comic 'Personal Experiences in Monkey Language'.<sup>41</sup> The dominant colonialist patrolling the jungle with his gun and slave boy of Garner's account becomes a pathetic caged figure, at the mercy of a monkey who has stolen his clothes (Fig. 13.6). Such comic treatments served to heighten, rather than dampen, popular interest in the area.



Figure 13.5. 'A Stroll with Aaron and my Slave Boy'. Richard Garner, 'Gorillas and Chimpanzees', *Pall Mall Magazine*, 2 (1894), 927. Courtesy of the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, shelfmark: Per 2705 d. 24



**Figure 13.6.** ‘Finding that a new kind of anthropoid had built himself a bamboo coop’. Bill Nye, ‘Personal Experiences in Monkey Language’, *Pall Mall Magazine*, 3 (1894), 649. Courtesy of the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, Shelfmark: Per 2705 d. 24

Garner’s work was merely at the extreme end of a wide spectrum of interest in the relationship between simian and child development which had been emerging since the 1850s. It had been fuelled, as I have suggested, not merely by Darwin but also by figures such as the anti-evolutionist Frank Buckland, who helped embed the notion that monkeys were almost indistinguishable from lovable, mischievous children. Darwin’s own work in *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* on the parallels between the child and the chimpanzee fed into Romanes’s research on monkeys and the emergence of a new science of animal psychology which was in turn closely interlinked with the evolutionary psychology of the new science of

child study. All these developments came together in the 1890s with the emergence of the child study movement, which bridged both popular culture and high science, bringing together concerned parents with evolutionary biologists and child and animal psychologists. The question of the relationship between the child and the animal world lay, as I will show in the following chapter, at the heart of these developments.

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PART  
IV

Childhood at the  
*Fin de Siècle*

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# I4

## Child Study in the 1890s

Alexander Chamberlain concludes his 1900 text *The Child: A Study in the Evolution of Man* with an impassioned vision:

The child, in all the helpless infancy of his early years, in his later activity of play, in his naiveté and genius, in his repetitions and recapitulations of the race's history, in his wonderful variety and manifoldness, in his atavisms and his prophecies, in his brutish and in his divine characteristics, is the evolutionary being of our species, he in whom the useless past tends to be suppressed and the beneficial future to be foretold. In a sense, he is all.<sup>1</sup>

At once atavism and prophecy, the child, in this *fin de siècle* projection, becomes the bearer of all future hope. Although at the extreme, optimistic end of child study, Chamberlain's text nonetheless gives expression to the fascination and intensity of interest focused on the figure of the child in the 1890s. With its potentiality waiting to be unfurled, the child becomes in this view an embodiment both of all past history and an expression of future possibility. The highly Romanticized conception emphasizes the role of play and childhood imagination, while the 'brutish' elements which the child is also deemed to express are rhetorically glossed over and allied with the divine in this teleological vision of an evolutionary sweep towards perfection. In the yearning nostalgia of the image, the child becomes the key to self-understanding, to a realm of a lost past, and also the guarantee of a more positive future.

Similar sentiments are to be found in the writings of Stanley Hall, Chamberlain's mentor. In the preface to *Adolescence* he suggests that 'the boy is father of the man in a new sense in that his qualities are indefinitely older and existed . . . untold ages before the more distinctly human attributes were developed'. In order for the child to develop its full nature, and to save us from 'the omnipresent dangers of precocity' which exist in 'our urbanised



hothouse life, that tends to ripen everything before its time', the child must be positively incited to visit nature, 'the true homes of childhood in this wild, undomesticated stage from which modern conditions have kidnapped and transported him'.<sup>2</sup> Recapitulation theory is forcibly yoked to Romantic conceptions of the child of nature, so that the child is positively required to live an existence compatible with its animal nature up until the age of 8 (unlike Rousseau, Stanley Hall fiercely curtails natural existence at this early age, so that the child, in keeping with its stadial development, can now 'be apprenticed to the higher qualities of adulthood').

When Dickens called in *Dombey and Son* for society to cease to be unnatural, this was probably not what he had in mind. The mid-century concern with precocity and hothouse education has now become central to a recapitulatory theory of human development which privileges the young child as an embodiment of a lost animal nature. The moral impetus remains, nonetheless, the same. For Stanley Hall, as for Dickens and Chamberlain, the child holds the key to salvation of our 'shop-worn' and 'bankrupt' culture for it is 'freighted with reminiscences of what we were so fast losing'.<sup>3</sup> His methods, however, are completely other—an exploration of the animal mind: 'The best and only key to truly explain mind in man is mind in the animals he has sprung from and in his own infancy, which so faintly recapitulates them: for about every property of the human mind is found in animal mind, as those of higher animals are found in the powers of the lower.'<sup>4</sup> Darwin's project in the *Descent* and the *Emotions* is here made the keystone of a redemptive science which, in exploring the animal qualities of the child mind, would restore to an over-pressured culture its natural lines of development.

Chamberlain and Stanley Hall are more emotive and extreme in their rhetoric than English counterparts, but their work does suggest the centrality of engagement with understanding the child mind at the end of the century.<sup>5</sup> The huge growth of literature for children in the last two decades was matched by an equivalent growth of interest in finding ways to study, scientifically, the development of the child. Many different disciplinary strands and forms of practice contributed to this movement. Thus the panic about 'over-pressure' in schools during the 1880s had led to work by Francis Warner to measure the health and mental fitness of over 50,000 schoolchildren. In America, G. Stanley Hall had launched his research in child study with a massive survey designed to assess and tabulate the content of children's minds.<sup>6</sup> Such statistical methods, however, were at odds with

the individualized studies favoured by Preyer or James Sully. As Sully noted sourly, 'You will get more knowledge of child-nature by studying one child's doll worship with something like thoroughness, than by collecting millions of scrappy observations'.<sup>7</sup> Childhood study was seen to lie at the heart of a whole range of disciplines. The child, as Sully observed in his preface to Perez's *The First Three Years of Childhood*, was a 'memento' of race development, so close scrutiny of the infant would cast light on 'the beginnings of human culture, the origin of language, of primitive ideas and institutions' as well as animal development.<sup>8</sup> The child is thus to be studied not simply for its own sake but as an entry point for all the emerging historical disciplines of evolutionary biology and psychology, anthropology, and historical philology. In an age when the dominant mode of understanding had become historical, the theory of recapitulation gave unprecedented centrality to the child mind.

In 1899 the British Child-Study Association inaugurated its journal, *The Paidologist*. G. Stanley Hall, in his role as unchallenged leader of the American child study movement, contributed some opening remarks. 'To study children wisely and well', he notes,

one must know a good deal of biology, and especially the embryology of rudimentary organs; of the instinct of animals; the psychology of the deaf, blind, idiotic, insane and criminal classes; something of anthropology, especially those parts which deal with savage myth, custom and belief; something of the history of philosophy and religion; and must have a genuine, earnest and sympathetic love of childhood.<sup>9</sup>

Although the list is daunting, it is not merely the product of rhetorical hubris for it gives a fairly accurate reflection of some, though by no means all, the disciplinary and cultural elements which lay behind the work of the early child study movement (literature is here conspicuous by its absence). 'Child study, as I regard it,' Stanley Hall observes, 'marks the advance of evolutionary thought into the field of the human soul.'<sup>10</sup> The language can be read as both militaristic and imperialist: science is to lay claim to that domain which has until this point remained the territory of theology, philosophy, and literature—the human soul. Stanley Hall's orientation was not necessarily adopted, however, by members of the British branch of the Child Study Association, and one can trace in the work of its members both a greater openness to the role of literary texts and a wider range of methods than the statistical surveys or experimentation adopted by the Hall school. Rather than viewing the rise of scientific child study as a

form of usurpation, it can be more profitably analysed as a complex network of discursive and disciplinary activities, encompassing the various forms of science adumbrated by Stanley Hall, but also extending outwards into further literary, educational, and domestic fields.

By the 1890s the scientific field of infant study opened up by *Mind* had become a major area of interest across the periodical spectrum.<sup>11</sup> The preoccupation with infant development in the pages of *Mind* had been matched in the educational sphere by the relaunching of the *Journal of Education* in 1879, which carried articles by leading scientists and educationists, and future leaders in the child study movement. Early contributors included the psychologist Alexander Bain and eminent educational figures such as Dorothea Beale and the president of the Froebelian Society, Emily Shirreff, as well as George Romanes and James Sully.<sup>12</sup> The associated Education Society had the psychologist and philosopher James Ward as its president, whilst vice presidents included T. H. Huxley, John Lubbock, and Sully.<sup>13</sup> The journal covered the over-pressure controversy in great detail, as well as new developments in the science of child study, from Francis Warner's work on schoolchildren to reports of Stanley Hall's work on the contents of children's minds.<sup>14</sup> The volume for 1895 offered an account, by Mary Louch, of Cheltenham Ladies' College and one of the founders of the British Child-Study Association, of her period of studying with Hall. She describes in detail not only the methods of child study, but the experimental psychology which accompanied it, with detailed scientific apparatus to study reaction times or the operations of the senses.<sup>15</sup> It was this form of work which elicited the hostile observation in 1894 that Rousseau's wish for a treatise on the art of observing children had finally been granted:

the study of children has become a passion. We have not merely treatises on the art, but minute, systematic accounts of the art as practised by *savants*. We have it interpreted in terms of science, and supplemented by laboratory investigations, delicate tests of the sensorium, of the velocity of nerve currents, motor localizations, and the physical equivalents of will and feeling.<sup>16</sup>

As its location in the American journal *Poet Lore* might suggest, this response came from a highly partisan observer, convinced that literature, and more specifically Browning's 'Sordello', offered the best entrance into the mind of a child. Similar hostility to the science of child study can be traced in Britain, but the tradition there was both less dependent on physiological experimentation and more catholic in its orientation.

By the 1890s one finds a deluge of scientific, educational, and literary texts with titles like *The Children*, *The Mind of a Child*, *Child and Child Nature*, or *The Development of a Child*.<sup>17</sup> A similar phenomenon can be traced in the periodical press with the emergence of such titles as *Baby: A Magazine for Mothers* (1888), *Parents' Review: A Monthly Magazine of Home Training and Culture* (1890), and *Child Life: A Kindergarten Journal* (1891, the organ of the Froebelians), and finally in 1899, *The Paidologist*. Interest in the child ran hand in hand with that in parenting. The Parents' National Education Union, organized by the headmistress Charlotte Mason, was set up in 1889, with high-level support from bishops, dons, and physicians such as James Crichton Browne.<sup>18</sup> The ensuing publication, however, roused alarm in some quarters: *Macmillan's Magazine* published a comic response to the first issue of *Parents' Review*, 'The Cry of the Parents. (By one of them)'. Elizabeth Barrett Browning's outcry against the exploitation of children in factories, 'The Cry of the Children' is transformed into a plea for the harried parent who is to be subject to a 'tide of meddling' with the possibility, in an inverse of the natural order, of parents, rather than children, being 'plucked' as they fail the proposed examinations in parenting (an ideal, one should note, recently reinstated by the Labour government in the UK, with its suggested classes in parenting). The writer strenuously opposes what he sees as the 'premature forcing of every look and gesture as expressing a taste or characteristic. . . . Every look, every movement, we are told, is to be trained and made much of, the little brain must be early excited and tested.'<sup>19</sup> The obsessive interest in all aspects of early development is here turned into a new recipe for that dreaded pairing: overpressure and precocity.

The British Child Study Association, by contrast, was both more eclectic in its approach and more overtly scientific in its orientation, with James Sully as one of its leading lights. It was founded by Mary Louch and two other women teachers, following a visit to the Education Conference at the World's Fair in Chicago in 1893, where they came across the work of Stanley Hall, who had recently launched the American National Association for the Study of Children. Various branches were set up initially in Britain, leading to the founding of the national association in 1898 and the establishment of the journal in 1899.<sup>20</sup> The association and journal were building on two decades of explicit scientific and cultural attention to the development of the child, and they brought together an unusually broad range of disciplinary interests and constituencies. Sharing the same platform at meetings, or the pages of the journal, one could find child psychologists

and psychiatrists, animal psychologists and biologists, teachers and mothers. Parents (generally female) were to work together with scientists (invariably male) to share thoughts and help, as the opening editorial declares, 'on that one subject of surpassing interest—the bringing up of our children, the evolutionary progress of our race'.<sup>21</sup> The mundane maternal chore of child-rearing here becomes, through verbal transubstantiation, synonymous with the glorious sweep of onward human progress.

The issue of how to study children, however, was fraught. What kinds of data were desirable, and indeed permissible, and who was qualified to collect it? The upwardly aspiring male scientists, keen to establish a new discipline of child development, were in an uneasy relation of dependence upon parents and teachers to supply their data. If they eschewed the simple anthropometric measuring of Galton,<sup>22</sup> or the statistical surveys of Warner, they moved into a position where mothers' accounts, or indeed literary depictions, became potential, or even essential, sources of data. The journal carries numerous requests from scientists for data from parents or teachers, with Earl Barnes, at one end of the spectrum, requesting information on imaginary companions, whilst at the other Karl Pearson, one of the founders of eugenics, calls on teachers to supply details on the relationship between academic ability in a pupil and conformation of the skull.<sup>23</sup> Yet the journal also carries a steady flow of articles and editorials insisting that mothers are not competent to observe their own children. Mothers fought back, however, with articles claiming their own superior abilities, and privileged forms of access, when it came to observing the mind of the child.<sup>24</sup>

The tensions between all these different constituencies are captured in the opening volume with an article by Earl Barnes (one of the vice-presidents of the association, and former professor at Leland Stanford University, California) on 'Methods of Studying Children' which directly follows Stanley Hall's opening remarks. He outlines nine different methods, starting with undirected observation by women in the home and school. Such studies, he argues, can only be undertaken unconsciously if they are not to damage 'a child's personal rights'. They also have the disadvantage that their results could not 'be transferred to another, except possibly by a sort of spiritual contagion'.<sup>25</sup> Whilst his precise meaning might be opaque, the implications are crystal clear: a mother attempting, unaided, any systematic study is liable to harm her child and to pollute the scientific enterprise. The only other category which receives such a negative evaluation is that of 'statistical surveys', here identified with his rival Stanley Hall, where he has pleasure

in quoting William James's verdict: 'It will be well for us in the next generation if such circulars be not ranked among the common pests of life.'<sup>26</sup> Barnes welcomes 'Reminiscent Autobiographies' as undertaken by J. S. Mill, Pierre Loti, or Tolstoi, but is less certain about the contribution of 'Artistic Interpretations'. His final recommendation, however, is a catholic inclusiveness, drawing on a combination of all methods.

The uneasy relationship between the various constituencies involved in the BCSA is reflected in its contents, where support for women speaking on child life at the Women's International Conference<sup>27</sup> follows an article by the current president of the BCSA, the arch misogynist T. S. Clouston, 'What the Brain has to do in Youth besides "Getting Educated"', which offers his usual line on the limitations on brain energy and the dire effects of higher education for women: 'Anything that in a woman interferes with future potential motherhood nature especially resents.'<sup>28</sup> The animal psychologist Professor Lloyd Morgan, who was elected president in 1900, thus continuing the male line, addressed the readers, in the now familiar condescending form reserved for female audiences, on the importance of animal study for understanding the child mind. He asks 'even the mothers to give me a patient hearing' as he expounds his belief that 'the child passes in the course of its mental development from the lower level of animal intelligence to the higher level of human intellect'. His discourse, like that of Lewes and Sully before him, anticipates objections from the partial mother, who is assured that 'Of course, our own children are exceptional; that goes without saying.' There needs, however, to be an average in order that 'the real importance of Tommy's remarkable character [can] stand out in bold relief':

And are we to be told that when Tommy, a few years ago, lay crooning, sweet cherub, in the cradle, he was little, if at all, better than an animal? Pardon me, dear madam, I do not speak thus disrespectfully of Tommy or your own sweet Mary. . . . so far as I do particularise I speak not of your children but of other people's.<sup>29</sup>

With such patronizing attitudes operative even in an organization and journal founded by women, it is not surprising that when it came to experimental work, it was men who dominated the field.<sup>30</sup> Women, particularly in the United States, did undertake detailed work chronicling infant development, most notably Millicent Shinn,<sup>31</sup> but the fields of direct experimentation, and the wilder shores of speculative thought, were reserved for men.

The question of the relationship between the child and the monkey was one which much preoccupied participants in the child study movement. Dr Louis Robinson, a resident surgeon in a children's hospital, was one of the first English practitioners to follow Kussmaul's example and actually experiment on babies in order to demonstrate the relationship between simian and infant life. His results were published in a series of articles in the *Nineteenth Century* and *Blackwood's* which attracted extensive scientific and popular attention. In 'Darwinism in the Nursery' (1891) he argued that there was a huge gap to be filled between embryology and anthropology, which could be achieved by opening up the nursery to science. Darwin had opened the field with his own observations on his children, he notes, but many salient traits escaped him, thus suggesting 'that the great man was scarcely so supreme in his own nursery as he was in the wider field of research'.<sup>32</sup> Once more the territorial struggles between masculine science and the female domain of the nursery are set in play. Robinson opens the article with an extreme version of the now customary declaration of female observational ineptitude: 'the average mother, in spite of many unquestioned merits, is about as competent to take an unprejudiced view of the facts bearing on the natural history of her infant as a West African negro would do to carry out an investigation of the anatomy and physiology of a fetish'.<sup>33</sup> The extraordinary condescension of this passage draws on the standard ethnological grouping of women, children, and savages to position them as figures outside the charmed circle of scientific reasoning.

Robinson set out to prove our arboreal ancestry by testing babies' power of grip. His role as resident physician in a children's hospital clearly gave him an experimental advantage. 'Finding myself', he notes without further comment, 'in a position in which material was abundant, and available for reasonable experiment', he tested sixty babies under a month old, half within an hour of their birth, to see if they could hang from a bar. He had one 'performer', he claimed, of three weeks who held on for two minutes and thirty-five seconds.<sup>34</sup> He also claimed to have taken photographs, although publication had to wait for a subsequent article on 'Reflex Action' in D. H. Tuke's *Dictionary of Psychological Medicine* the following year.<sup>35</sup> Whereas the original article had referred to babies hanging onto a finger or small stick, Robinson clearly decided to opt for a more graphic branch of a tree (Fig. 14.1) to enable readers more easily to imagine babies as young monkeys swinging through their arboreal habitat. The posture of the hanging babies, Robinson observed, 'and the disproportionately large development of the arms compared with



Infants suspended from branch of tree.

**Figure 14.1.** ‘Infants suspended from branch of tree’. Louis Robinson, ‘Reflex Action (Physiological)’, in D. H. Tuke, *A Dictionary of Psychological Medicine* (1892), ii. 1076. Courtesy of the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, shelfmark: 1535 d. 139

the legs, give the photographs a striking resemblance to a well-known picture of the celebrated chimpanzee “Sally” at the Zoological Gardens.<sup>36</sup> In an interesting reversal, the affectionate evolutionary anthropomorphism lying behind the public’s delight in ‘Sally’ is transferred to the babies themselves.



Robinson's work was very influential.<sup>37</sup> It was endorsed by Romanes and Sully, and provoked extended debate both in the scientific and popular press, becoming, it seems, a licence for the 'psychological papa' to experiment on his own children. Thus a 1911 work on *Child Nurture* claimed that 'scientific fathers in Germany took to dropping their infants out of windows to see if, like kittens, they would alight on all fours; or hanging them onto trees by their hands to prove their descent from monkeys'.<sup>38</sup> Although one would hope that the first claim is apocryphal, the passage does highlight the fascination exerted over the public mind by the idea that the infant is closer in mind and body to the monkey than the adult human race. Robinson extended his ideas in a range of other popular articles. In one of the strangest, 'The Meaning of a Baby's Footprint', which aimed to show, from ink prints of babies' feet, that the foot was originally a 'prehensile organ', he suggests we should 'dwell upon the evolutionary interpretation of the strange inscriptions on this newly-discovered and most ancient historic document, the infantile sole'.<sup>39</sup> Theological probings of the soul are to be replaced by readings of the foot, as the denizen of the nursery is flourished before the readers' eyes in the guise of a newly unearthed prehistoric relic. He concludes that 'the higher the ape, the more do the plantar lines resemble the vestigial creases on the infant foot'. His research had been hindered, however, by the fact that 'monkeys object to experimental physiological research with a vehemence almost equal to that observable in certain other quarters among members of an allied species'.<sup>40</sup> For a surgeon in a children's hospital, who could gain access to experimental 'material' without the opposition (and, I assume, the permission) of mothers, it was clearly easier to work with infants than with animals. Robinson's other articles included 'Darwinism and Swimming', in which he argued that it was a child's lack of ability to swim which proved its ancestry from apes (had he had foreknowledge of birthing pools, no doubt he would have seized upon them to argue the reverse case), and 'The Child and the Savage'.<sup>41</sup> In the latter, he builds on the long-established comparison between the facial features of the baby and the savage. Herbert Spencer, in his influential 1857 essay on Progress, had drawn on this supposed parallel to suggest the higher evolution of the European.<sup>42</sup> Robinson now deploys it to argue that the infant does not 'favour' either parent, because it is closer to its ancestor, 'Primitive Man'. Whilst the 'ten-months baby is practically a quadruped', the slightly older child has the posture and the spine formation of the 'cave-dweller'. There follow various suggestions about the survival of savage instinct in the child, from love of climbing and killing to sham-fighting.

These parallels were taken up and developed, at far greater length, a couple of years later by the geologist and palaeontologist Sydney Buckman, in 'Babies and Monkeys'. Like Robinson, he opens his article with an examination of the facial characteristics of the baby, compared this time to those of the monkey (simian, he reminds us, is a term which is derived from the latin, *simus*, for 'flat or snub-nosed'). He laments the fact that current photographs of babies and children give no thought to scientific value. They should, he argues, be taken both in profile and full face so the gradual transformation of the child to adult can be plotted. Without 'positive evidence', it would 'hardly be credible that the small-jawed, long and prominent-nosed individual, with high forehead, was in babyhood prognathous, short and snub-nosed, with a remarkably receding forehead'.<sup>43</sup> Even the puffed cheeks of babies, so adored by mothers and churchmen as evidence of a relation to angels are in fact, 'really the attributes of a lower order, and are the vestiges of cheek-pouches, possessed for storing away food, as in *Cercopithecus*, a monkey in which this habit of storing may be observed at the Zoological Gardens' (p. 730).

Buckman's interests extend to the actions of children, which, he observes, 'may fitly be compared to ancient monuments of prehistoric times' (p. 743). Taking his cues from Robinson and Darwin, he ventures far deeper into the speculative realm, trying to find an ancient parallel for all aspects of child behaviour. The pleasure of midnight feasts and eating in bed are to be traced to the instinct of dragging food into one's lair, whilst the tearing of wallpaper re-enacts the process of searching for ants under bark. A fondness for rolling dates back to the time when we had hairy bodies and parasites, and 'the insane desire of an infant to climb up stairs' is clear evidence of earlier simian habits. Buchman even goes so far as to suggest that nursery rhymes themselves can be read as survivals, prehistoric documents in their own right. 'Lullaby baby on the tree top' thus becomes a folk memory of our arboreal ancestry (p. 736–8, 733). Throughout the article there is no sign of the distaste which fuelled so much of the degenerationists' writings, or the horror of potential regression to our hidden animal nature so vividly expressed in Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886). The tone is rather that of the affectionate understanding expressed in Buckland's writings on his monkeys, or the nostalgia so redolent in Hall's suggestion that we should return the child to its original habitat within nature.

‘Another “animal” relic which exists in children’, Buckman observes, ‘is an instinctive desire for stealing, especially for stealing fruit, which, however hard and unripe, seems to give the child pleasure’ (p. 736). One is reminded of Buckland’s indulgent attitude to his monkeys who steal, ‘only because it is their instinct to do so, and for the pure innate love of mischief, and nobody can blame them’. Applied to child care, this attitude suggests a new perspective, far removed from the strict regime of the mid-Victorian era. Buckman is keen to extend his findings to child rearing, suggesting, in the process, a revolution in practices. ‘It is remarkable’, he notes, ‘how much unnecessary suffering is inflicted on infants and children because parents fail to recognize the ancestry from “animals”, and consequently the instincts, different from those of adults, which children have inherited (p. 733). Although the reference here is to sleeping habits, the implications are wide-ranging. Mothers are found to be at fault for attempting to impose human rules of behaviour on their animalistic offspring. No longer are children to be trained in morals and manners from the start, but allowed to exist in their early years in their true animal state. As Crichton Browne had observed a decade earlier, parents ‘should remember that children are not little nineteenth-century men and women, but diamond editions of very remote ancestors, full of savage whims and impulses, and savage rudiments of virtue’.<sup>44</sup> Writing from the psychiatric perspective, however, Crichton Browne was not applauding such ‘savage’ traits, but rather offering a warning to parents. By contrast, the psychologists, tracing a line of descent from animal rather than ‘savage’ stock, were more open-minded, more willing to value animal traits as evidence of a lost ancestry which should be reclaimed. The relationship between the child and the monkey, particularly as interpreted through ideologies of mischievous boyhood, becomes a subject of affectionate celebration. Although Buchman’s article did not garner much scientific support, it caught the public imagination, and gave expression to a new willingness to think of the child as a different order of being, whether, at one extreme, as a radically alien, animal ‘other’, or alternatively, as a form of amusing domestic pet.<sup>45</sup>

Sully’s contributions to this debate were more measured, as befitted one of the leading lights of the new psychology of childhood. In 1893 *Mind* published his appeal to parents and teachers to ‘supply him with facts bearing on the characteristics of the childish mind. What he especially desires is first-hand observations carried out on children during the first five or six years of life.’ Observations were to be classed under a range of

thirteen headings including Imagination and Fancy, Language, Fear, Self-Feeling, and Artistic Production.<sup>46</sup> As the list suggests, he is less interested in the animal side of human inheritance than the factors which make an infant human. Although firmly wedded to ideas of recapitulation, it is to the parallels with 'primitive' life he turns, rather than those with animal nature. The appeal itself arises from Sully's awareness that authoritative research requires more data than can be gathered easily within the confines of the family circle, but he is clearly concerned about the quality of information that might be submitted. Informants are required to give exact age, timing and facts of temperament, surroundings and experience, in order that he can properly assess the data.

In his first major piece arising from this research, 'The New Study of Children' in the *Fortnightly Review* (1895), which formed the basis for the first chapter of *Studies of Childhood* published later that year, Sully returned again to gendered issues of authority.<sup>47</sup> The article actively engaged with the recent contributions to the debate in the *Nineteenth Century*. Sully endorsed Robinson's experiments on hanging babies from bars, but found Buckman's article 'fantastic'.<sup>48</sup> He also clearly had difficulty with the observations which flooded into him as a result of his appeal in *Mind*: 'Ask any mother untrained in observation to note the first appearance of that complex facial movement which we call a smile and you know what result you are likely to get.'<sup>49</sup> The question of the first smile was an issue of frequent contention between male and female observers, with the male scientist insisting on a comparatively late date, in keeping with the view of the baby as a bundle of physiological reflexes, whilst women tended to trace recognition and response at an early stage. Darwin, in reworking his notebook material for the 'Biographical Sketch', had discounted Emma's observation that their third child, Henrietta, had smiled at three weeks, opting rather for forty-five days (Preyer subsequently nominated a more drastic seventeen weeks).<sup>50</sup>

In order to control the quality of observations, the discipline of child study needed, Sully argued, 'qualified workers' who would possess 'A divining faculty, the offspring of child-love, perfected by scientific training'.<sup>51</sup> Male and female traits are clearly to be combined, but only men, it would seem, were fitted to achieve such a harmonious union. Mothers would not be sufficiently skilled or bold enough to attempt the experiments conducted by medical men like Dr Robinson. Such activities would be viewed as a form of sacrilege:

To propose to test the little creature's sense of taste by applying drops of various solutions, as acids, bitters, &c., to the tongue . . . would pretty certainly seem a profanation of the temple of infancy, if not fraught with danger to its tiny deity. And as to trying Dr Robinson's experiment of getting the newly-arrived treasure to suspend his whole precious weight by clasping a bar, it is pretty certain that, as women are at present constituted, only a medical man could have dreamt of so daring a feat.

Even if women did obtain scientific training, and *also* become mothers, they would not be disposed to undertake the 'rather dry and teasing work' of taking a scientific inventory of 'infantile sense-capacity'. Such experimental work should be left to 'the coarser-fibred man'.<sup>52</sup>

Yet in the very next paragraph Sully recognizes that women will have to play a larger role if men are to obtain consistent data. He is at pains to point out, however, that even the apparently simple task of recording children's early talk can be marred by lack of scientific understanding. His dissatisfaction with the quality of data he received in his appeal to parents is evident: 'The unskilled observer of children is apt to send scraps, fragments of facts, which have not their natural setting. The value of psychological training is that it makes one as jealously mindful of wholeness in facts as a housewife of wholeness in her porcelain.'<sup>53</sup> In yet another attempt to master this complex field of gender politics, the male scientist is humorously depicted as a fussy housewife, but the implied distinction between male and female abilities remains. Sully concludes the article with an apparent compromise, offering the pious hope that one day 'some duly qualified mother, aided by a quick-eyed and sympathetic young teacher [earlier identified as male] may soon give us the history of a child's mind'.<sup>54</sup>

In Sully's next piece in the *Fortnightly*, 'The Child in Recent English Literature' (1897), he tears to shreds a production by a mother, the poet and essayist Alice Meynell, who has presumed to offer her observations unaided by a masculine guide. He pours scorn on her 'pretty' treatment of a 'pretty theme' and notes sarcastically that 'she comes certificated by an authoritative hand as trained by maternal sympathy in the unlocking of children's secrets'. Her presumption in offering observations on the first smile, which she places at the end of two weeks, thus contradicting the pronouncements of those 'trained observers', Darwin and Preyer, is mercilessly attacked.<sup>55</sup> In part the struggle here is the gendered one between the maternal figure and the masculine scientist, but there is also an element of *amour propre* (the 'authoritative hand' which recommended the book in all advertisements

was that of Sully's close friend George Meredith), and an additional element of territorial conflict.<sup>56</sup> Meynell's methodology is dangerously close to Sully's own: she uses data from individual children, and also draws extensively on literary sources. Sully, whose early research included work on the physiology of aesthetics, is the most literary-orientated of this early generation of psychologists. He is keen to draw upon literary representations in his research, while also maintaining the scientific validity of his work and the superiority of the scientific eye when analysing childhood in the literary text.

Sully is also intensely critical of recent literary texts themselves, which he feels do not adequately represent the domain of the child mind. Thus Kenneth Grahame's *The Golden Age* (1895) is criticized for its 'tone of cynical superiority' and for endowing children with adult perceptions, while J. M. Barrie's *Sentimental Tommy* (1896), which endows the 5-year-old Tommy with a near genius for storytelling, should be 'read as a pretty farce'.<sup>57</sup> The only works which gain his approval in this article are two short books by William Canton, *The Invisible Playmate* (1894) and *W. V. Her Book* (1897), which have since disappeared into utter obscurity. Despite a level of sentimentality which outstrips anything to be found in Meynell, Sully praises these works, based upon a father's diaries, for capturing 'all the capricious wilfulness, all the quaint fancifulness, all the fun of nature's own child before it gets clipped into our conventional pattern'.<sup>58</sup> The judgement is based on a nostalgic valuation of the 'natural' in childhood which is only possible from the perspective of an outside observer: 'quaint', with its implied differential between speech and subject position, is not a perception available to a child.

Sully's own interpretation of childhood is an attractive one. Following in the footsteps of Herbert Spencer, and even more emphatically G. H. Lewes, who envisaged acquired qualities of mind being passed to descendants, he does not envisage the infant starting off, as Romanes suggested, at the level of a mollusc. His infant is not an animal but rather the equivalent of primitive man; he comes into life, however, with additional 'ancestral dowering', so that he starts life at a higher level than the 'race's starting point'.<sup>59</sup> He looks to the mind of the baby not just to trace the workings of animal appetite, but also, following Kant, the origins of moral sentiment.<sup>60</sup> His is a firmly progressive vision of human progress to which the infant holds the key. His interpretation of the primitive is also deeply benign. Following his friend Stevenson's arguments in 'Child's Play', his

children seem to dwell in a 'mythological epoch'. Infancy is the 'Age of Imagination', and 'child-thought, like primitive folk thought, is saturated with myth'.<sup>61</sup> Young children possess a 'vitalising and personifying instinct' which colours their world (p. 31). The highest form of imagination, the 'magic transmutation of things' is to be found in play, the 'working out into visible shape of an inner fancy' (p. 35). Sully thus distinguishes child play from the forms of play to be found in animals, as noted by Darwin, for only a child can pass out of itself and 'assume a foreign existence'.<sup>62</sup> Imagination is central to Sully's conception of the child, and of intelligence itself. Thus even when the child passes into the 'dawn of reason', 'inventive phantasy' is still key, for 'In the history of the individual as of the race, thought, even the abstract thought of science, grows out of the free play of imagination.' (p. 70) Far from following Crichton Browne in seeing childhood imagination as threateningly pathological, Sully places it at the heart of adult creativity.

Sully focuses throughout on the creative aspects of childhood, whether in the acquisition of language or the role of child as artist or draughtsman, where he draws on Pitt Rivers's collections of 'savage' drawings to highlight the parallels. Here too, play lies at the root, for the 'play-impulse becomes the art-impulse . . . when it is illumined by a growing participation in the social consciousness' (p. 327). Sully frequently suggests that the child mind is superior to the adult mind, but he is careful not to make his child figures into paragons of virtue. The argument as to whether the child is essentially innocent or sinful is misplaced, he suggests, for the child, although it has the potential for moral development, is not yet a moral being. It exists, initially, in a state of 'primitive egoism' (pp. 228–9). Under this heading, Sully is able to recast the pessimistic interpretations of child deviancy offered by Maudsley and others. Thus a small girl, experiencing a strong dislike towards a baby, attempted to smash its head, yet despite this 'precocious explosion of infanticidal impulse', she grew up to be a 'kind-hearted woman' (p. 239). Where Crichton Browne or Maudsley would diagnose alarming evidence of childhood insanity, Sully sees the behaviour as an understandable response to a 'trying' situation where a child feels itself supplanted.

Similarly, the child's cruelty to animals, which had been a subject of concern since the end of the eighteenth century, particularly with reference to boys, is treated with corresponding mildness.<sup>63</sup> Sully does not interpret such behaviour as evidence of innate cruelty, or, in Darwinian terms, of

inherited animal instincts, but rather traces it to a child's 'combination of love of power and of curiosity'. The child, he believes, is motivated by a desire to 'possess and completely dominate' a pet animal, with that 'odd mixture of sociability and love of power which makes up a child's attachment to the lower animals'. Where destructive cruelty is clearly in play he sees it as evidence of the play of 'untamable curiosity', which causes the child to overlook the suffering it causes, or, in the case of small animals or insects, of a love of power bound up in the child's own activity, which impel him 'to arrest the movement of small manageable things' (pp. 240-1). Although Sully states initially that a child for some time after birth is 'little more than an incarnation of appetites', and its fits of rage like those of 'an infuriated animal' or the insane, he constantly steers clear of attributing such behaviour to animal inheritance. Rather, there is keen suffering to be seen in these acts of 'thwarted will and purpose' (pp. 231-3). Where animal inheritance is invoked, it is in positive mode, as in his suggestion that a child's natural attachment to animals forms the basis of altruism: 'In a sense a child may be said to belong to the animal community, as Mr Rudyard Kipling's charming account of the Jungle prettily suggests' (p. 247). (Despite his scathing attack on Meynell, Sully himself frequently deploys the sugared emptiness of sentimental language.) Sully traces the passionate attachment of the child to the animal to a sense of 'common danger and helplessness face to face with the human "giant"', and a similar impulse, he suggests, causes the child to stand up for servants when they are scolded or dismissed (p. 249). The child is of the animal kingdom, but its instincts are always, in this reading, more developed, its bond with the animals itself a sign of a more highly evolved social consciousness.

Sully also explores the role of fear in the child's life. He distances himself from Darwin's suggestion that his son's fear of animals at the zoo was evidence of fear transmitted from savage ancestors (p. 208). His emphasis is not on inherited traits but on the complexity of child experience. In an anticipation of Freud's concept of the uncanny, he suggests that a child's fear can be evoked by 'a sense of the uncanny, like that which we experience when a place seems familiar to us though we have no clear recollection of having seen it before' (p. 200). Sully uses the idea of the uncanny to explain why a child could be afraid if, as in the case of a baby, 'familiar things are seen after an interval', or surroundings undergo partial alteration. Unlike the Freudian theory, the explanation refers neither to inherited memories nor to the resurgence in adulthood of long-buried feelings, but rather to the



uncanny as a characteristic experience of childhood, as the infant struggles to come to terms with an environment which is both familiar and constantly changing.

It is unclear whether Freud, in developing his concept of the uncanny, as 'that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar', drew upon Sully's work. Certainly he was familiar with it, although it is not cited in this essay.<sup>64</sup> Intriguingly, Freud seems more in thrall to nineteenth-century notions of inherited primitive beliefs than Sully. His theories of the uncanny encompass two distinct elements: 'an uncanny experience occurs either when infantile complexes which have been repressed are once more revived by some impression, or when primitive beliefs which have been surmounted seem once more to be confirmed'.<sup>65</sup> Freud envisages two forms of recapitulation, ontogenic, when infant experiences re-emerge in adulthood, and phylogenetic, when primitive beliefs are re-enacted. In practice, he suggests, there is no great distinction between the two categories since 'primitive beliefs are most intimately connected with infantile complexes, and are, in fact, based on them'.<sup>66</sup> Although Sully constantly draws parallels between the child and the primitive, he is less preoccupied than Freud with phylogenetic recapitulation, and his understanding of the uncanny refers not to the adult state but rather to the negotiation of experience within childhood itself.<sup>67</sup> In a sense he telescopes the entire time schema, so that re-emergence refers neither to inherited nor revived childhood memories, but, in the condensed framework of an infant's life, to the experience of a few weeks before.

Sully, like other child scientists and evolutionary biologists of the period, was fascinated by the relationship between language, thought, and self-consciousness, the awareness of self as a distinct being. George Romanes had argued that human life was distinct from animal life not, as Max Müller had maintained, because of the use of language, but because only the human being emerges into self-consciousness.<sup>68</sup> This shift marked, for him, the move from animal to human psychology and status. Sully, by contrast, argued that thought and self-consciousness could precede the use of language.<sup>69</sup> The child could be observed thinking, he noted, before 'the age of speech'.<sup>70</sup> In this he follows Preyer, who had argued that memory and thought in the young child were independent of language.<sup>71</sup> Sully follows the line adopted by Darwin and Taine, that there were parallels between the acquisition of language by the child and that of the race, with expressive cries and imitation both playing a role.<sup>72</sup> Like

Taine, he is keen to emphasize, however, the creative use of language of the child. In his article Taine had argued that the child, like 'primitive peoples at the poetical and mythological stage', uses language analogically, seizing on resemblances in creative ways: 'Originality and invention are so strong in a child that if it learns our language from us, we learn its from the child.'<sup>73</sup> Sully, in his chapter 'The Little Linguist', similarly emphasizes the child's creative use of language and its evolutionary parallels: 'Thus the child's metaphorical use of words, his setting forth of an abstract idea by some analogous concrete image, has its counterpart, as we know, in the early stages of human language. Tribes which have no abstract signs employ metaphor exactly as the child does.'<sup>74</sup>

In exploring the child's development of a sense of self, Sully looks at the way in which a child responds to a mirror, gradually building up a sense of relationship to its own physical image.<sup>75</sup> He also considers, however, how far children, like primitive peoples, develop animistic concepts of a shadowy second self. His examples are drawn from literature, from George Sand's response to an echo and Hartley Coleridge's differentiation of various 'Hartleys', 'a picture Hartley and a shadow Hartley'.<sup>76</sup> From George Sand he also draws the idea that for a child, the 'apprehension of a hidden self distinct from the body' might come as 'a sudden revelation': 'Such a swift awakening of self-consciousness is apt to be an epoch-making and memorable moment in the history of the child.'<sup>77</sup> Psychology and literature here intertwine in their attempts to theorize and explore the first dawns of an inner sense of self.

Sully's book was well received, confirming his position as the leading psychologist of the British child study movement.<sup>78</sup> There were, however, some dissenting voices, one of which came from a woman writing, most unusually, for that authoritative, and male-dominated, journal *Mind*. Granted the daunting job of reviewing Sully's *Studies of Childhood*, Alice Woods, the principal of Maria Grey College and a stalwart of the child study movement, dared to take him to task for a naive and sentimentalized view of childhood (precisely his own complaint against Meynell).<sup>79</sup> She suggests that 'Studies of Gifted Childhood' might be a more appropriate title, given the prodigies of imagination displayed by his examples. She also notes the seeming sex bias in the studies: 'It would seem that boys are far cleverer than girls, from Professor Sully's collection of stories, or is it that parents are wont to pay more attention to the sayings and doings of their sons than of their daughters? I suspect that this is the true state of the case.'<sup>80</sup> Children are not so immune, she suggests, as Sully would like to think from the stresses of our introspective and worldly

nineteenth century. They do not dwell in as 'sacred and undisturbed abode as Professor Sully pictures it'.<sup>81</sup> She makes her point humorously, not through the lumbering, uneasily comic voice so often adopted by her male peers, but with a quiet, gentle humour which deflates scientific pretensions to knowledge. Far from tracing humanity back to its simplest sources, and observing impartially in ways only men can achieve, these male psychologists are actively creating the subjects they seek. The subjects learn, however, to answer back. Alice Woods offers her own, subversive, observation of nineteenth-century childhood: "'Don't be so silly K'" said a parent to his ten-year-old daughter. "I can't help it Father", was the prompt reply, "I've inherited it from Mother." In the quick-witted response of this child, the evolutionists' theories of female inferiority become a weapon of offence. Far from dwelling undisturbed in a sacred realm, this child has both absorbed social attitudes to femininity and turned them to her own advantage.

Amidst the male writers who dominated coverage of the field in *Mind* and the high-brow range of periodicals at the time, Woods's is a rare voice. The establishment of infant development as a legitimate area of study, however, also led to the creation of a range of new childcare magazines, where women often took a leading role. One of the most prominent of these new magazines was *Baby: An Illustrated Magazine for Mothers and Those who Have the Care of Children, being a Guide to their Management in Health and Disease*, started in 1887 by Ada S. Ballin.<sup>82</sup> While magazines like the *Englishwoman's Domestic* had always drawn upon medical science in their childcare columns,<sup>83</sup> Ballin, who styled herself 'Lecturer to the National Health Society', adopted an explicit scientific orientation for *Baby*. The magazine aimed to offer 'the opinions of the highest authorities in medicine, hygiene, and education, as to the best means of physical, mental and moral training'.<sup>84</sup> Inevitably, such medical authorities were invariably male. The first volume, for example, carried, in addition to Sully's article on 'Children's Fears', a series by Dr Edmund Owen, Surgeon at the Great Ormond St Hospital, on 'The Science of the Nursery', and, prominently placed on the third page, 'How to Observe a Baby' by 'Francis Warner, M.D., F.R.C.P, F.R.C.S., Hunterian Professor of Comparative Anatomy and Physiology in the Royal College of Surgeons, England'.<sup>85</sup> In the pages of a female-edited and oriented magazine, women were to be taught, by a much garlanded professor, a skill that had always resided traditionally, without contestation, in the female domain.

Ballin herself contributed some excellent articles on Froebel and the Kindergarten system of education, and employed a range of female authors to write on aspects of childcare and child development, but the aims of the magazine itself were firmly restricted to the education of *mothers*. Thus the opening editorial of the second volume expressed ‘disgust’ at an article published elsewhere by the ‘New Woman’ writer Mona Caird, on the upbringing of children: ‘A woman who would voluntarily delegate her maternal duties to a stranger, no matter how scientifically trained she may be, is no more worthy of the name of mother than an incubating machine.’<sup>86</sup> Respect for scientific training is tempered by an inflexible adherence to traditional gender roles: a scientifically trained woman poses a threat to maternal centrality. Ballin’s conflicted position on the question of science and babyhood offers, in some respects, a gendered mirror image of the difficulties faced by Lewes and Sully. Whilst they sought to wrest observational control of the nursery from women, without compromising the masculinity of their scientific practice, Ballin wished to promote understanding of masculine science, whilst keeping the nursery itself firmly under maternal control.

Although *Baby*, by its very title,<sup>87</sup> would appear to have targeted an exclusively female audience, Ballin was quick to announce, in her opening editorial for volume 3, that she had received so many interesting letters from gentlemen that she was changing the title of ‘Mother’s Parliament’, which published readers’ handy hints and child observations, to ‘Parents’ Parliament’. Her claim raises interesting questions about reading patterns and audiences. Did men surreptitiously read their wives’ copies, and then write in to Ballin? Or had the new respectability of ‘baby science’ altered family dynamics, so that husband and wife both read *Baby* and debated its contents? Alternatively, was this a ploy by Ballin to encourage a new masculine reading constituency?

Ballin’s primary audience, however, was undoubtedly female, and armed with a firm sense of a devoted audience, and secure in her sense of women’s rights to address the issues of child development, she looks out critically on the male domain of periodicals. She comments favourably on the fact that the *Nineteenth Century* had published an article by ‘one of Professor Huxley’s talented daughters’, Jessie Waller, on the physical and mental training of children.<sup>88</sup> It was, she noted, a very good sign of the times when such material was placed before the *Nineteenth Century*’s readers, ‘who, I take it, are mostly serious-minded men, politicians, scientists, and clubmen’. The hint of mockery offered here is further

developed in her following observations on the *British Medical Journal*: 'It having recently become the fashion to discuss matters connected with children in the public press, we are not surprised to find the *British Medical Journal* gravely debating the question of thumb-sucking.'<sup>89</sup> The embarrassment which Lewes and Sully had displayed in attempting to turn baby study into a domain of science is here wickedly turned against the male scientist. Insult is added to injury by Ballin's dismissive claim that the author is probably a bachelor, and hence the article quite worthless. We are back once more in the domain of gender wars, with Lewes's image of the male and female struggling for control of the cradle.

The development of the science of child study in the second half of the nineteenth century enacted a series of territorial struggles over space: domestic, discursive, and professional. Periodicals played a crucial role in its rise, as male scientists sought to convince both male and female readers of science's right to enter the hallowed space of the nursery. On the domestic front, scientists faced the very real problem of how to obtain data in the face of female opposition, and also how to maintain dignity whilst penetrating into a traditional female domain. The story of the initial growth of this science in England is not one primarily of laboratories and experiments, but rather of tentative debate in the periodical press. With the publication of Darwin's article in *Mind*, the field acquired a new legitimacy, and rapid growth ensued, leading to the publication of a spate of articles in *Mind* itself and other scientific and popular journals, and the institution of female-targeted magazines such as *Baby*. The questions of scientific legitimacy and masculine entitlement which Lewes had playfully addressed in his early article, however, survived well into the 1890s.

In histories of psychology, James Sully is generally acknowledged as the founder of England's first major psychological laboratory, at University College London. Given his interests one would have expected it to focus on, or at least encompass, early child development. In a letter in the *Journal of Education*, designed to publicize the proposal and appeal for funds, he is at pains, however, to point out that this will not be the case:

the proposed laboratory is not, as one London journal appeared to think, a place where confiding mothers may deposit their infants in order that a learned professor may ascertain by experiment whether, for example, they can discriminate what are to us offensive tastes, or, like their simian ancestors, hang with their whole weight on to a bar. . . . The laboratory modestly proposes merely to study the familiar mental processes as they can be observed in older children and adults.<sup>90</sup>

Despite the attempts by Lewes, Sully, and others to dignify and legitimize the experiments of Kussmaul and Robinson, they had clearly not convinced the British reading public.<sup>91</sup> Sully might not have been met by the ‘vulnerable execrations of outraged womanhood’ which Lewes claimed were his lot, but he is clearly not prepared to take on the might of public opinion expressed within the periodical press. His scientific agenda is thus curtailed, and only older children will be involved in experiments within his laboratory. The science of child study in Britain, from its early comic emergence in the pages of the *Cornhill*, through to its stately coming of age within *Mind*, and institutionalization in the 1890s, was both framed and shaped by periodical debate. In the following chapter I will explore how literary texts also contributed to the late-century explorations of the early development of the child mind.

## Autobiography and the Science of Child Study

In his address to the meeting of the Medico-Psychological Association in 1900 Henry Maudsley launched a scathing attack on recent work on the psychology of children. He warns of the dangers of the student of the child's mind reading into it the workings of his own. Trying to imagine oneself as a child cannot work, for 'no feeling nor thought, however much the same in look, can possibly have the same meaning in the forming and in the formed mind'.<sup>1</sup> In truth, the much prized 'simplicity, directness, and innocence of a young child's mind signify the absence of mind'. He has no time whatsoever for the Wordsworthian visions of 'latent intuitions' and clouds of glory espoused by 'sentimental adorers', chief of which he singles out, once again, that much maligned figure, the mother, who perceives a heavenly smile in 'the purely reflex movement excited by a pleasant visceral stimulus'.<sup>2</sup> What mind a baby does possess is 'surely more vicious and ugly than innocent and beautiful'. 'Is there', he demands, 'in sober truth any other living creature's offspring which is so passionate, so selfish, so noisy, so troublesome, so exacting, so offensive in some respects as the human baby?' Maudsley draws on ideas of evolutionary development to devastatingly negative effect. The baby is 'the product of the most powerful, tyrannical, and selfish animal in the world. . . . Heir to all the ages of human selfishness and self-worship it shows the distinctive marks of its descent.'<sup>3</sup> Where Sully had celebrated both the child's kinship with an innocent primitive world and its higher moral attainments, Maudsley grimly focuses all man's past misdeeds in the figure of the baby.

Maudsley's pessimistic evolutionary interpretation of infancy colours his responses to recent attempts at child study, particularly those which attempt to 'pry' into the mind of the infant. The observer, in 'trying to

make a baby-mind of his mind in order to feel and think like his baby, runs the risk of making a baby of himself in another sense'. His particular opprobrium is reserved for those who attempt to recapture their own childhood experiences:

And what shall be said of the latest development of this line of inquiry in the person of the lady psychologist who in mature years sets forth elaborately all the wonderful thoughts, feelings, and imaginations which she had as a child from the time she left the cradle and presents them as a contribution to psychology?<sup>4</sup>

Maudsley's view is that study of the child mind should proceed through careful physiological observation of its movements, 'for mental apprehensions are based on motor apprehensions'. This unfortunate 'lady psychologist' has committed all the sins: not only is she indulging in psychological intuition, she has had the audacity to suggest that her own fanciful construction of her supposed childhood feelings could actually make a contribution to science. Such pretension clearly places her on a lower level than the doting mother who eagerly traces the signs of a smile in the mere physiological reflexes of her baby.

Maudsley's position, however, represented an extreme response, and was not entirely shared by either the psychiatric or psychological communities. In his analysis of permissible methods of child study, Earl Barnes had welcomed 'Reminiscent Autobiographies', but was less convinced of the value of 'Artistic Interpretations', offered by Stevenson's poems, for example, or Pater's essay, 'The Child in the House'.<sup>5</sup> James Sully, as we have seen, was even more open than Earl Barnes to including autobiographies or literary analyses as appropriate sources for a scientific study of childhood. Indeed the organizational categories of Sully's *Studies of Childhood* show strongly the influence of the literary on his work, with chapters on the role of the imagination, of fear, and the development of morality and religion. Rather surprisingly, given his interest in Eliot, and an earlier essay where he had praised her work precisely for its 'scientific precision' and ability to trace characters 'to their remote beginnings in early life, when impressions are most powerful and enduring and habit takes shape for life', he does not recommend *The Mill on the Floss*.<sup>6</sup> He singles out for individual attention, instead, two French autobiographies, George Sand's *Histoire de ma vie* and Pierre Loti's *Le Roman d'un enfant*. His essays on Sand, first published in *Longman's Magazine* (1889–90), are given pride of place as the concluding chapter of *Studies in Childhood*. Although Sand's



magnificent and monumental text was published mid-century (1854–5), it was republished in a four-volume edition just before she died in 1876, and extracts on childhood, for use as a teaching text on child study, were published in English in the 1890s.<sup>7</sup> For Henry James, a great admirer of Sand, it led the way in accounts of early life: ‘as an autobiography of the beginnings and earlier maturities of life,’ he comments, ‘it is indeed finer and jollier than anything there is’.<sup>8</sup> For Sully, one of the attractions of Sand’s text must have been its evolutionary orientation. She was firmly committed to the doctrine, articulated in France primarily by Comte, that we can read in the life of the child the history of the race:

Isn’t the life of the individual the sum of the collective life? Whoever observes the development of the child, the passage to adolescence, to maturity, and all our metamorphoses until old age, is witnessing an abridged version of the history of the human race, which also has its childhood, its adolescence, its prime, and its maturity.<sup>9</sup>

Sully praises Sand for her ability to live over again her childish passions, yet also discuss them with ‘artistic aloofness’.<sup>10</sup> The framework of such ‘aloofness’ comes from Sand’s repeated attempts to understand her own experiences through analogy with primitive life. She celebrates, in opposition to Rousseau, the child’s imaginative life, which places it, like the ‘savage’, in a milieu of the ‘supernatural’. Parents are wrong to impose adult explanations of divinity, for example, ‘For what good does it do to expose the symbol to the child, for whom all symbol is reality’ (pp. 421–2). Sully was similarly to celebrate the child’s imaginative powers and ‘analogical and half-poetical apperception of things’, their capacity to dwell in a world where ‘words are not dead thought-symbols, but truly alive and perhaps “winged” as the old Greeks called them.’<sup>11</sup>

Sully’s article is a compilation of extracts from Sand, focusing on the role of imagination and play and her development of her own religion, based around the imaginary spirit Corambé, which, he argues, ‘is probably the most remarkable instance of childish daring in fashioning a new religion, with its creed and ritual all complete’.<sup>12</sup> He also cites her discussion of her responses to dolls, a topic which John Lubbock had placed firmly on the anthropological agenda by arguing that the doll is ‘a hybrid between the baby and the fetish’.<sup>13</sup> Sand anticipates these debates, drawing on Comte’s ideas of the fetishistic stage of early human development to explain her early attachment, and repulsion, towards her dolls. Children, she suggests,

exist between the real and the symbolic. They need to care for or scold, to caress or break this child- or animal-fetish they have been given as a plaything and have wrongly been accused of growing disgusted with too quickly. On the contrary, it is very simply that they grow disgusted with themselves. By breaking it, they are protesting against the lie. (p. 435)

Nineteenth-century childcare books often used the destructive instincts of childhood, as shown in children's aggression towards animals or dolls, as evidence of their lower, animal nature. Sand here turns that argument around to suggest that the destruction of the doll is actually a sign of mental progress as the child moves out of the 'symbolic' stage of its infancy. Such development, however, is at a cost: self-disgust. The violence meted out against the doll is actually an act of violence against the self, as the child attempts to repudiate its earlier, more credulous incarnation. Human progress, she suggests, is neither a linear process nor pain-free; to move from one stage to the next is not merely to cast off earlier forms but to undergo a torturing experience of self-contradiction which can manifest itself as self-hatred.

Sand's text is far more than a meditation, however, on the relations between the child and a distant 'primitive' past. It is also concerned with the immediate sweep of history that engulfs her. The first quarter of the book is thus devoted to an account of the life of her father and his forebears. Sully, significantly, attributes the book's neglect by English readers to this 'tediously full account of ancestors' that precedes the childhood sections.<sup>14</sup> Paradoxically, a psychology of childhood based on a premiss of historical recapitulation here works to dehistoricize understanding of an individual life. Evolutionary psychology deals with abstractions known as the 'child mind' and the 'primitive mind' and can be rendered uncomfortable by specificity. For Sand, however, knowledge of her family history is essential if one is to comprehend her own development. Sully is torn between his often subtle readings of the class and familial conflict which surrounded Sand and his desire, as psychologist, to abstract an instance of the 'child mind' which can float free of class, gender, familial relations, or historical positioning. The tension is that manifest in Darwin's uncertainty as to whether a 'biographical sketch' of one child could count as science, or in the methodological debates in the *Paidologist*, where statistical surveys are set against the 'non-transferrable' results of subjective, individualized studies.

The power of Sand's text comes precisely from her detailed, highly nuanced account of the impact of issues of class and gender and historical events upon her development.<sup>15</sup> The product of a cross-class marriage

between the daughter of a Parisian bird-seller and an aristocratic descendant from the Polish king, she is torn throughout her childhood between conflicting class allegiances and the destructive competition between her upper-class grandmother and lower-class mother for her physical placement, her loyalty, and her affection.<sup>16</sup> All this is played out on an intensely politicized stage. As a small child, she is dragged by her mother across war-torn France and Spain in pursuit of her soldier father, aide-de-camp of Marshal Murat, who was stationed in a palace in Madrid. Even the dolls she destructively tears apart are no ordinary dolls, but those left behind by the fleeing Infanta. Her dreams and nightmares are haunted by immediate political events, specifically the Napoleonic invasion of Russia in 1812 that so devastated the French army. In all its ranging across philosophical and anthropological thought, Sand's text also insists repeatedly on the importance of the familial, social, and political context in the formation of a child's mind.

The subject of Sully's other extended study of child autobiography, Pierre Loti's *Le Roman d'un enfant* (1890), proved, in some regards, easier for him to discuss.<sup>17</sup> An extraordinarily lyrical, sensuous work, which focuses almost entirely on the interplay of the emotions and the senses, it offers very little sense of a wider world outside.<sup>18</sup> Sully notes that it is 'as subjective as a love lyric' but is nonetheless eager to accord it the status of objective science. It seems, he suggests, 'as if he were writing of another, of one whose innermost secrets had revealed themselves to him in a calm clairvoyant vision'.<sup>19</sup> Sully's adoption of the language of the occult in order to vouch for the objectivity of his subject is unsettling. One can see, however, why he is so eager to claim this work for child study in that it follows in many respects the framework, if decisively not the methods, of experimental, physiological studies of childhood. Loti, like Preyer, tries carefully to categorize the first arousal of each of his senses (in ways that anticipate Proust's later work on memory and the senses in childhood). Thus the visit of a violinist awakens his first reverie from music, whilst a vision of an old wall in the garden, 'defaced by the sun and weather, and overgrown with mosses, gave me for the first time an indefinable impression of the persistence of things; a vague conception of existences antedating my own, in times long past' (pp. 50-1, 14). The question of when a child first comes into self-consciousness, into an awareness of itself as a distinct being, was one, as we have seen, that preoccupied scientific observers of childhood at the turn of the century. Sully's belief that thought and self-consciousness could precede the use of language is one that is shared by all the literary texts

considered here. He also explores, like Loti, the emergence of a first awareness that the external world existed prior to the self.<sup>20</sup>

Interlinked with this interest in the first emergence of a sense of self was a quest to trace the earliest memories. Sully welcomes the fact that Loti's memories date back to his second year 'so that the narrative surpasses in retrospective reach all other records of childish experience'.<sup>21</sup> In a wonderfully evocative chapter, Loti describes the intoxication he felt on discovering he could run and jump. He recalls the leaping flames of the fire, the very pattern of the carpet, and his own wild movements:

In the circle of light, which grew ever more and more narrow, I still jumped; but as I did so I had thoughts that were of an intensity not habitual with me. At the same time that my tiny limbs discovered their power, my spirit also knew itself; a burst of light overspread my mind where dawning ideas still showed forth feebly. (pp. 6–7)

Loti attributes his awakening to the heightened intensity of his emotions at the time; extreme physical sensation, both from his own movements and his responses to the external play of light and dark cast by the fire, lead to a new sense of self-awareness, just as the sensuous experience of the warm sun in the garden, and the luxuriant details of the inanimate wall, were to bestow a new sense of self as a being in time. Loti's elation in the above scene quickly turns to terror, however—terror of the lengthening shadows and the absence of his mother. The poetic structures of the text hold, in suggestive association, the dawning of selfhood, terror, and maternal loss. As a pre-Freudian writer Loti does not have such explanations available to him; part of the text's power, however, comes precisely from its resistance to analytic forms of explanation, and from Loti's sense of the haunting inexplicability of his experiences. Why, for example, a shaft of light glimpsed in childhood should evoke a deep sense of poignancy, or why, years later, a ray of sunlight in Stamboul aroused 'precisely the same sad emotion, scarcely diminished by time' (pp. 26–7).

Loti does repeatedly ask, however, why it should be that a child raised in such a loving environment should suffer such bouts of fear and morbid emotions (pp. 53, 73). The question was one that was also key to evolutionary psychology and the child study movement. Thus Darwin, as we have seen, on witnessing what he deemed to be excessive fear on the part of his son when seeing the 'beasts in houses' at the zoo, had invoked the soothing explanation of ancestral memory.<sup>22</sup> Sully devotes a chapter of *Studies of Childhood* to childhood fear but interestingly does not follow

Darwin's lead here in attributing childhood fear to inherited memory, nor indeed that of Preyer or Perez, who all subscribed to some form of instinctive, and hence inherited, memory as the source of fear.<sup>23</sup> He attributes fear on the part of the child rather to a dislike of anything new, discomfort of the senses, or the play of the imagination. To illustrate the latter he draws on Loti's account of first seeing the sea, 'restless, treacherous, ready to swallow', as an example of the imaginative child's readiness to endow objects with life and purpose. He has little time, however, for Loti's 'speculations as to an inherited fear of the sea'.<sup>24</sup> Although Loti does not seem to subscribe overtly to contemporary theories of evolutionary biology, one can trace in his work an attraction to what could be called Romantic evolutionism, which fulfils his sense of mysterious interconnections linking the life of the past, present, and future. He has recourse to notions of ancestral memories to explain the premonitions and abysses of emotion he experiences in childhood, suggesting that his 'immature mind was already leavened by the memory of memories' (p. 60). This reflection is followed, significantly, by a chapter which depicts the game that he and Antoinette played for 'two delicious summers': the enactment of metamorphosis from caterpillar to butterfly, played with utmost seriousness and complete psychological investment in each stage (pp. 62–3). Where Sand seeks to understand, to explain, to structure, Loti allows his evocative scenes to stand free of any causal or linear narrative. The chapter is both a perfect example, for the child psychologist, of childhood's imaginative play, and a metaphoric commentary on evolutionary development.

Whilst the Sand and Loti autobiographies were important exemplary texts for the devotees of child study, the two British autobiographies I will now consider were themselves clearly influenced by the child study movement of the 1890s. The first, by Frances Hodgson Burnett, was written in 1893, seven years after the phenomenal success of *Little Lord Fauntleroy*.<sup>25</sup> Entitled *The One I Knew the Best of All*, it had a subtitle on the first page of the text: 'A Memory of the Mind of a Child'. The subtitle is crucial: the book will focus not just on general recollections but on the actual processes of mental development within a child. As in the child study movement, it is an attempt to understand the workings of the child mind by studying one particular example in detail: in this case—herself. Through her title, Burnett enters into the debates on observational competence, claiming superiority for the autobiographical method. She notes in her Preface that she is offering not so much a self-centred work as 'The Story of *any* Child with

an Imagination'. She has attempted to make 'a picture, not of a particular child, but of the impressions made upon a child mind as the panorama of Life passed before it, explained only by itself—a picture of the mental impressions of a little unit of whose parallels there are tens of thousands'.<sup>26</sup> In order to achieve the objectivity promised in this designedly representative study of a single 'unit', Burnett adopts the unusual narrative strategy of speaking of her subject in the third person: she is referred to throughout as 'the Small Person'. The narrative stance is further complicated by Burnett's attempts to eschew hindsight: the impressions on the child mind are to be 'explained only by itself'. We are thus offered in the opening paragraphs the rather startling claim that 'I have not the remotest idea of what she looked like', a distinctly unusual position for a third-person narrator to inhabit. It captures, however, that era of life before self-consciousness encompasses an awareness of bodily image. No photographs were taken, Burnett comments, which might have supplemented this lack, and instead she turns to the bodily register, to a memory of early physical pain as a comb tugged at a curl, to surmise that the Small Person had curls.

Burnett enters into the child study preoccupation of trying to record the form and substance of earliest memories, and also the debate as to whether children could think in advance of language. Like Sully, who draws extensively on her work, she answers the latter question decidedly in the affirmative.<sup>27</sup> The first memory she records, from the age of 2, is that of wanting to hold her newborn sister on her knee. The nurse at first refused, and then relented, all the while still holding on so that the child, unbeknownst to the nurse, was aware she was not *really* holding the baby. Burnett records, not the child's actual language, but 'what she *thought* she expressed and what her hearers *seemed* to understand her to say'. She recognizes that the child 'was too young to have had in her vocabulary the *words* to put her thoughts and mental arguments into—and yet they were there, as thoughts and arguments are there to-day—and after these many years I can write them in adult words without the slightest difficulty' (pp. 5, 7). Burnett endows her 2-year-old with sophisticated structures of perception, including the awareness that those around her 'imagined she was a baby not capable of thinking at all'. She calls on adults to recognize that the 'mite' tumbling on the floor 'is a *person*, and that this person is ten thousand times more sensitive to impression than one's self' (pp. 7, 3). Whilst Preyer argues that a child uses 'I' for a considerable period before developing a sense of self which will lift him

out of his animal nature, Burnett, at the opposite end of the spectrum, insists on complex subjectivity long before the attainment of linguistic mastery.<sup>28</sup>

There are strong parallels between this memoir and that of Sand in charting the growth of the imagination. While Sand as a small child created what her mother termed her ‘novels-among-four-chairs’ (p. 427) (where she had been penned to keep her safe), the Small Person was always to be found under the Sitting-Room Table, ‘whispering, whispering, whispering beneath its shadow’, enacting stories with her dolls (p. 60). Although Burnett does not follow Sand or Sully in linking her stories with dolls to acts of primitive fetishism, she reproduces, in a lightly humorous vein which is captured by the illustration, images which are nonetheless disturbing of the Small Person violently whipping her black doll in re-enactment of a scene from *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (Fig. 15.1). She also enacts full burials of her dolls in the garden.<sup>29</sup> Whilst Burnett does not align herself with theories of childhood as a form of recapitulation of primitive life, she is clearly aware of the passionate interest in child study in the 1890s and archly distances herself from its excesses. In her childhood, she remarks, ‘the Children’s Century had not begun. Children were not regarded as embryo intellects, whose growth it is the pleasure and duty of intelligent maturity to foster and protect.’<sup>30</sup> She was a ‘story-maniac’ but ‘it did not occur to her that she had an intellectual condition’ (pp. 98, 100, 101). Burnett resists the categorization and medical labelling which can follow in the wake of professional child study, focusing rather, from the child’s perspective, on the utter naturalness of the Small Person’s behaviour.

*The One I Knew the Best of All* shares with the other memoirs and scientific studies a fascination with the role of perspective in childhood, in relation to time, space, and the assigning of significance to events.<sup>31</sup> Burnett skilfully contrasts the death of ‘Papa’, which scarcely impinged on the Small Person’s mind, with her encounter with a policeman in the park. His good-humoured, but unthinking, confirmation of her fears that, if she fell off the bench and thus touched the forbidden grass he would be forced to carry her off to prison, was productive of many nights of horror. Although Burnett does not dwell overly on the painful sides of childhood, she stresses, like Loti and Sand, the child’s capacity for terror that appears, to the adult, incommensurate with its years. Unlike Sand, Burnett did not have a childhood torn between classes but her memoir similarly registers a child’s acute sensitivity to the nuances of class. Born in Manchester to a relatively



Figure 15.1. ‘She was lashing that poor black doll and talking to herself like a little fury’. Frances Hodgson Burnett, *The One I Knew the Best of All*, with illustrations by Reginald Birch (1893), 49. Author’s own copy; image courtesy of Oliver Christie

prosperous family, she nonetheless associated with three social gradations of child: Square children, Street children, and, lowest of all but most exotic, Back Street children.<sup>32</sup> While psychologists focused narrowly on a child’s first language acquisition, Burnett suggests that she acquired two highly differentiated languages, her own and that of the Back Street children. The literary memoir here takes the same categories of exploration as



scientific child study, but by placing experience within a specific social setting, it can transform the questions asked. Language becomes not merely a form of consolidating a dawning sense of self, but also the gateway to multiple, potentially divided selves.

Class division also plays a role in the final autobiographical text I am considering, *Autobiography of a Child* by a little-known Irish writer, Hannah Lynch.<sup>33</sup> Strictly speaking, it is not an autobiography of a child since it was composed long past childhood. Yet, in the other sense of the term, that one is always a child of one's parents, it is absolutely the autobiography of a person who has never ceased to be the child of its mother. The text opens reassuringly, 'The picture is clear before me of the day I first walked', following the now established convention of trying to determine earliest memories. It continues, however: 'My mother, a handsome, cold-eyed woman who did not love me, had driven out from town to nurse's cottage.' This refrain of the mother 'who did not love me' punctuates and structures the entire text. Lynch records that 'Memory begins to work from the moment nurse put me on a pair of unsteady legs'. She toddles in intoxication from chair to chair until she collapses at her mother's feet: 'I burst into a passion of tears, not because of the fall, but from terror at finding myself so near my mother' (pp. 1–2). The sense of alienation of a lifetime seems packed into this intense moment of first memory. At an age when Preyer and Sully placed the child in a stage of predominantly animal consciousness, prior to the dawning of a sense of self, Lynch attributes to her child a vehement life of passion, and an understanding of family dynamics. Like Loti, Lynch sets first memory at the point of discovering the joy of independent movement, but whereas his subsequent terror stems from awareness of the absence of his mother, that of Lynch's child arises from the mother's presence. Happiness for Angela, the text's protagonist, resided with her nurse, and her humble 'everyday papa' for the seven years she lived with them, and misery in all of her encounters with her mother. At the end of seven years with her foster family, Angela returns to live with her mother and siblings, who are virtual strangers to her. Although all the children suffer from the tyrannies of the mother, it appears that they do not make common cause against their enemy.

While the Victorian novel had portrayed legions of absent or ineffectual mothers, and many appalling mother substitutes such as Jane Eyre's Aunt Reed, this is perhaps the first time a text appears to offer a full-bodied assault on an actual mother. (Samuel Butler's *The Way of All Flesh*, which

was decisively fuelled by his own relations with his parents, was written at this stage, and no doubt festering, but was not published until after his death in 1903).<sup>34</sup> Since we know so little about Lynch it is impossible to tell just how far the text is based on her own life. Certainly the sensation it created when published was based on the assumption that it was autobiographical.<sup>35</sup> To read it is to gain a strong sense of personal emotion which is refracted through the concerns of the child study movement and novelistic texts. There are parallels with Henry James's *What Maisie Knew*, published two years earlier, which was similarly preoccupied with a child whose 'little long history' was contained in the words 'Mamma doesn't care for me'.<sup>36</sup> Similarities exist between Sir Claude and Angela's kindly but ultimately cowardly stepfather, but in terms of the anger and emotional intensity expressed in the *Autobiography* its real predecessor is *Jane Eyre*. In a conflation of the scenes of the 'red room' and Lowood, Angela is sent away by her cold, unloving mother to a miserable convent school, on account of her disruptive behaviour (she describes herself, in terms very reminiscent of *Jane Eyre*, as 'a desperate little spitfire, full of uncontrollable passion' (p. 26)). Whilst there her fury at being accused of being a liar causes her to be locked away in a room, bringing about a complete breakdown of her psychological and physical health.

Lynch's text can be read as a reworking of *Jane Eyre* under the influence of the Child Study movement. She employs child study techniques, analysing the unreliability of memory, which she terms a 'random vagabond' that 'plays queer tricks with proportion' (p. 5), and also exploring the developing awareness of the different sensations. Of her memories of a trip in an engine with her 'everyday papa' she observes, 'This is a memory of sensation, not of sight' (p. 6). We are aware throughout, however, that this is not a generic or abstract 'child mind' but one whose every process of development was shaped and defined by her relations with her mother. Although the mother, a highly intelligent woman of brilliant conversation, was given to fits of fury when she would beat her children and bang them against the walls (p. 3), it is on her mental cruelty that Lynch concentrates. She would never let her children preserve any relics, gifts, or souvenirs, and in what seems an inspired act of cruelty, she destroyed all Angela's treasured personal items before sending her to school. 'If my mother had been an early Christian or a socialist', the narrator observes, 'she could not have shown herself a more inveterate enemy of personal property.' She ascribes such enmity to

a despotic ferocity of self-assertion. The preserving of relics . . . implied something beyond her power, something she could not hope to touch or destroy, implied above all an inner life existing independent of her harsh authority. The outward signs of this mental independence she ever ruthlessly effaced. (p. 124)

Lynch was writing at the same time as Freud, but in all likelihood without any awareness of his theories. She depicts, however, an extraordinary 'will to power' on the part of her mother which cannot easily be encompassed within a Freudian analysis of family dynamics.

Psychologists in the child study movement worried that mothers would prove inadequate observers of their children due to excessive partiality. The assumption in the child study texts and periodicals was that the child (inevitably middle-class) was surrounded by benign adults, there to study, and facilitate, the development of the child mind; there was no theoretical space that might allow the possibility of a mother who seeks to crush signs of individuality in the child. *Autobiography of a Child* suggests other more disturbing conditions than the 'spiritual contagion' which might arise from transferring maternal data from one child to another. Lynch clearly supports the aims of child study: 'How grossly and wickedly mismanaged children are', the narrator observes with reference to the grandmother, 'by people who do not think or stop to study them!' (p. 87). Her text is thus in harmony with the aspirations of the British Child-Study Association, whose professed object was 'to study children with a view to the discovery of more sympathetic and more successful, because more natural, methods of education'.<sup>37</sup> It suggests, nonetheless, that something more than child study is required; it is not simple ignorance on the part of her carers that inflicts on Angela 'scars no time can efface' (p. 88). While Burnett calls on her readers to recognize the extreme sensitivities of the pre-linguistic child, Lynch foregrounds the actively destructive propensities of her mother figure. Images of maternal nurture are replaced by those of abuse.<sup>38</sup>

Lynch's text offers a fierce antidote to those many saccharine celebrations of childhood innocence and fantasy that appeared amidst the 1890s passion for childhood. Like the other autobiographies considered here, it also offers a helpful corrective to the overly narrow parameters of the emerging science of childhood. The divisions between the literature and science of child study were not as deep as Tolman Smith suggested. While Stanley Hall and Warner might put their faith in surveys and statistics, Sully continued to champion the power of the individual study and drew actively on literary texts and autobiographies in his work on childhood.

He used these resources, however, to create a portrait of an abstract entity—the child mind: one determined no doubt by inherited, evolutionary memories, but taken outside of the pressures of immediate historical context, whether of class position or familial power struggles. The invention of a new scientific discipline—child study—brought with it the concomitant requirement for an object of analysis and experimentation, and data that could be purged of individual or incidental elements to arrive at transferable general conclusions. The very qualities which made literary autobiographies attractive to science—the sheer density and individual specificity of detail—also made them more resistant to scientific incorporation. Yet, conversely, the same methodological tension can also be traced in the literary text: thus Burnett claims, somewhat paradoxically, that her autobiography is not of ‘a particular child’ but rather a ‘unit of whose parallels there are tens and thousands’. Scientific authority is to be drawn from the representative quality of the individual portrait.

Literary autobiographies and scientific studies of early childhood in the late nineteenth century were united in exploring the same questions: first memories of sensations, the emergence of a sense of selfhood, the relations between thought and language, and the origins of fear. Whilst diversity of approach was manifest on both sides, the autobiographies tended to adopt a more complex view of the factors which could influence the development of the child mind. The literary child does not move from sensation to selfhood in a seeming vacuum but is subject to intense pressures from its familial and social environment. Scientific projections of the child as a passive object of study are also disrupted. Children are not guileless, Lynch comments in an echo of Woods’s critique of Sully, but spend their lives in ‘unconscious acting’. They are ‘experimental artists with life’ (p. 42). The image is an attractive one. The role of experimenter is transferred from the scientist to the child, who as an ‘experimental artist’ becomes in itself the embodiment of literary and scientific creativity.

# 16

## Unnatural History: *Father and Son*

In the Preface to his 1907 memoir of his early life with his father Philip Gosse, the eminent naturalist and devoted member of the Plymouth Brethren, Edmund Gosse stresses the documentary qualities of his text. The narrative, he observes, is ‘scrupulously true’ and creates a record of ‘educational and religious conditions’ which have since passed away. It also offers ‘a study of the development of moral and intellectual ideas during the progress of infancy. These have been closely and conscientiously noted, and may have some value in consequence of the unusual conditions in which they were produced.’<sup>1</sup> Gosse sets his work directly within the framework established by all those conscientious recorders of child and infant development of the 1890s. The text was published anonymously, as if to foreground its role as a generic case-study, although a photograph of ‘father and son’, labelled simply 1857, and featuring an eight-year-old Edmund and his father, formed a frontispiece to the first edition (Fig. 16.1). By the fifth impression, published in March 1908, Gosse removed what he referred to as his ‘slight veil of anonymity’ and published the work under his own name.<sup>2</sup>

The ‘unusual conditions’ were those occasioned by the rigorous beliefs of his Plymouth Brethren parents, which cut him off from the customary trappings of a Victorian childhood. Gosse offers his life as a kind of experiment: a careful study of what happens when a child is denied a childhood. The wild children who fascinated the Romantics seemed to offer the possibility of studying human development outside a human framework. The very mystery of their origins, however, and their questionable mental status, meant it was difficult to treat these cases as definitive. His own life, Gosse suggests, is an almost perfect controlled experiment of a different kind: a study of a child who



Figure 16.1. '1857'; frontispiece to [Edmund Gosse], *Father and Son* (London: William Heinemann, 1907). Courtesy of the Master and Fellows of Balliol College, Oxford.

was brought up without contact with other children, works of fiction, or any life outside the home. The shift between his dutiful life of his father, published in 1890—where the memories, and the bitterness, of the child keep momentarily surfacing, only to be rapidly suppressed—and the 1907 memoir is in accordance with the increasing fascination with the development of the child mind at that period. In a sense, the child study movement gave authorization to Gosse to rewrite his family history and, despite the ordering of the title, to give prominence, finally, to the perceptions and responses of the Son.

Further evidence of Gosse's sense of himself as an interesting case of child development comes from a letter he sent to his friend the anthropologist J. G. Frazer:

If you come across an anonymous book called *Father and Son*, which is just published by Heinemann, let me tell you that it is I who have written it and that it contains some observations about the growth of moral (or savage) ideas in children such as I should not dare to lay before you, but such as I should be pleased if you thought of value.<sup>3</sup>

The slippage between moral and savage is significant, signalling Gosse's firm sense that the mind of the child, as Sully argued, was in the same state of evolutionary development as that of the 'savage'. The pattern of his self-observations in early childhood follows the categories of contemporary childhood studies. He carefully notes his first memories, the role of various sensations, the relationship between thought and language, the development of a moral sense and a sense of self, and the strong parallels between the child and savage mind. Although Gosse was not directly involved in the scientific circles preoccupied with child study, he was undoubtedly an informed observer, with numerous personal connections to the writers and academics involved. He was, for example, a close friend of Frances Hodgson Burnett at the time she wrote her autobiography.<sup>4</sup>

In keeping with the goals of the child study movement, he attempts to give as accurate an account as he can of his recollections of early infancy. Like the other literary figures writing memoirs, he is convinced that his memories stretch back before the beginnings of speech. He offers his vivid recollection of being in his baby-chair, alone in the dining room, when a greyhound entered the room and stole the leg of mutton from the table: the 'startling intensity' of this occurrence, he suggests, which took place well before he could speak, had served to stamp it on his memory when all else of this period remained in the 'darkness of my infancy' (p. 45). Gosse gives to his infant the

capacity to think and observe from early months, but postpones his development of a sense of self to a far later date. In his early years, he suggests, he lived almost in complete union with his parents, with God as a fourth member of the family, although he tended to confuse his father and God. His momentous waking to 'a sense of self, as a force and as a companion' occurred in his sixth year, from 'minute and soundless incidents' which nonetheless shattered his belief that his father was omniscient (p. 55).

Gosse dates this emergence into selfhood at the point when he acquires, through the crime of damaging the garden fountain, a sense of a concealed, secret self. Whereas the mid-Victorian child seems to surface simultaneously into the dark worlds of guilt and selfhood, the model in *Father and Son* is far more benign, following the evolutionary paradigm outlined by Sully, who maintained that the child 'is not yet a moral being'.<sup>5</sup> Gosse similarly argues that 'We attribute, I believe, too many moral ideas to little children' (p. 57). His child is neither the sublime innocent nor the evil spirit envisaged by evangelical doctrine, but rather, in evolutionary terms, the equivalent of a 'savage' who has not yet attained a moral state. The scene contrasts significantly with Pip's coming into self-awareness in *Great Expectations*, where he awakens to a sense of 'the identity of things' and that 'the small bundle of shivers growing afraid of it all and beginning to cry, was Pip'. This awakening occurs at the moment at which he meets Magwitch and becomes immersed in a world of guilt, theft, and 'mortal terror of myself'.<sup>6</sup> While Pip's emergence into self-consciousness is also an entry into 'terror of myself', Edmund experiences no guilt: neither his original act of damaging the fountain nor his subsequent concealment awakens any sense of remorse or guilt. Instead, he is almost elated by his discovery that his father is not, like God, omniscient, and by the concomitant sense of selfhood summoned into being by his newly discovered capacity to conceal:

But of all the thoughts which rushed upon my savage and undeveloped little brain at this crisis, the most curious was that I had found a companion and a confidant in myself. There was a secret in this world and it belonged to me and to a somebody who lived in the same body with me. There were two of us, and we could talk with one another. It is difficult to define impressions so rudimentary, but it is certain that it was in this dual form that the sense of my individuality now suddenly descended upon me, and it is equally certain that it was a great solace to me to find a sympathizer in my own breast. (p. 58)



The 1890s had been the era not only of child study, but also of the *doppelgänger*, as writers had explored in various ways the implications of a 'Jekyll and Hyde' model of psychology, where deep-rooted selfhood belies the acceptable social persona. Gosse adds complexity to this model, seeing duality not as a form of accretion of social existence, but as absolutely fundamental to the perception of selfhood, from early childhood on.<sup>7</sup>

His thoughts run along the same lines as those of Earl Barnes in his research on children's imaginary companions,<sup>8</sup> or Sully in his explorations of how a child construes its inner self. 'It seems to me probable', Sully observes, 'that, allowing for the great differences in reflective power, children tend to materialise it, thinking of it dimly as a film-like shadow-like likeness of the visible self'.<sup>9</sup> Where Gosse differs so significantly from his predecessors and contemporaries is in seeing deceit at the centre of a sense of selfhood. Only when the child becomes aware of its ability to possess a secret can it separate itself from its surrounding family and experience a sense of individual existence, an existence that is predicated on an internal, concealed life. Writers throughout the nineteenth century, from clerics and novelists through to psychiatrists, worried about the child's propensity to lie or deceive. Gosse overturns all these anxieties, and associated moral strictures, to suggest that lying or concealment is not an aberration but foundational to the structure of the self.

In his representation of his early childhood, with only his zealous parents for companions, Gosse focuses on the inappropriate nature of this environment for child development. His argument is not, however, that the religious regime was too strict, or even that his parents' literal interpretations of the Bible were too far-fetched, but rather that their religion was presented too rationally to a child still in the developmental stage of a savage. Their obsession with truth, and the consequent banning of all fairy tales or fiction, fostered in him a tendency to be 'positive and sceptical. Had they wrapped me in the soft folds of supernatural fancy, my mind might have been longer content to follow their traditions in an unquestioning spirit' (p. 50). Gosse draws on the Comtean language of development. Paradoxically, his Puritan parents have thrust him into the final, 'positive' stage of human development, when his instincts as a child place him rather in the earlier, fetishistic stage of the savage. Gosse reinforces this point with his descriptions of his experiments with 'an infantile species of natural magic'. His fantasies that birds in books could come to life, or that he could, during prayers, look down on his other self, were not, he argues, the result of any environmental

influences: 'I feel quite sure that nothing external suggested these ideas of magic, and I think it probable that they approached the ideas of savages at an early stage of development' (p. 61).

The consequences for Gosse of his upbringing at this time were quite severe: he offers one of the most detailed first-person accounts of childhood nervous disorder in Victorian literature. As an extension of his natural magic he starts to 'run pins into my flesh and bang my joints with books'. He becomes 'very pale and nervous, and slept badly at nights, with visions and loud screams in my sleep', culminating in 'a sort of fit of hysterics' (p. 61). Child hysteria, first discussed in detail in the 1850s, had by this time become an accepted, if uncommon, condition. Discussions of what is now termed 'self-harming' tended to focus on adolescent girls, and the tone here was frequently disapproving, treating such behaviour as mere bids for attention.<sup>10</sup> Gosse's discussion is more in line with the sympathetic work of Guthrie, *Functional Disorders in Childhood*, published in the same year as *Father and Son*, which saw child and subsequent adult nervous conditions as largely a result of misguided upbringing. Gosse, however, offers a more distinctive anthropological analysis, interpreting the actual form of his disturbance as a direct result of the savage, fetishistic stage of childhood life. Although Gosse's parents called the doctor, they did not follow his recommendations since they regarded his sufferings as 'the Lord's Will'. Gosse notes wryly that the only effect of the medical examination was to give him 'some valuable hints for my magical practices' (p. 61). Modern medicine is defeated by two forms of anachronistic behaviour: the theological practices of the parents and the fetishism of the child.

Edmund starts to experience 'night terrors', offering almost a case-book account of his sufferings, which he attributes, psychologically, to his father's ill-considered sharing of details of local burglaries and murders with him, thus exacerbating his nervous state. On going to bed he would suffer a 'ghostly riot' of noises, 'a rustling of clothes, and a slapping of hands, and a gurgling, and a sniffing, and a trotting'. It is finally discovered that the material cause of these noises was a framed religious text which began to 'gallop in the draught' when the door was left open (p. 63). Gosse clearly selected this detail for its symbolic import: the banging religious text is the external expression of the religion which his parents were attempting 'with too mechanical a persistency to force into my nature' (p. 60), creating an equivalent 'ghostly riot' within.

Edmund's experiments with natural magic lead up to his 'great act of heresy', when, in order to test the 'efficacy of prayer' and to explore the sin of idolatry, he addresses his daily prayers to a wooden chair. The act is both a continuation of fetishistic practices and an advancement into the modern age of scientific experimentation. His act recalls the famous (or infamous) experiments by Francis Galton to test the 'objective efficacy of prayer' (his essay on that topic, which caused such controversy on first publication in 1872, was only republished in the same year as *Father and Son*).<sup>11</sup> Gosse describes his act as 'puerile and preposterous', but in placing it within the tradition of recent debates concerning the 'efficacy of prayer' he is aligning his actions with one of the most distinguished scientists of the day. The fact that this supremely rebellious act evokes no response—'I had committed idolatry, flagrantly and deliberately, and God did not care'—leads him not to question the existence of God, but rather to lose further confidence in his father's knowledge and authority (p. 67).

In representing his early life with his parents, Gosse constantly balances anger and respect. When he is beaten, and his father justifies the act by quotation from Scripture, he is murderously angry, but there is no suggestion at all that his father resembles the odious, hypocritical Theobald in Samuel Butler's *Way of All Flesh*, who similarly resorted to biblical self-justification.<sup>12</sup> His parents' motives are never questioned, although their actions and judgements are represented almost invariably as inappropriate and hence damaging in their consequences. In his 1890 life of his father, Gosse had allowed his anger to surface in depicting the scene of his own birth. His father had just launched into his microscopic studies and was pursuing his interests in *Rotifera* through studying stagnant pans in the garden:

In the midst of all this, and during the thrilling examination of three separate stagnations of hempseed, poppy seed, and hollyhock seed, his wife presented him with a child, a helpless and unwelcome apparition, whose arrival is marked in the parental diary in the following manner:—'E. delivered of a son. Received green swallow from Jamaica'.<sup>13</sup>

The pointed juxtaposition of 'thrilling' and 'stagnation' transforms this latter term into a judgement on his father, whose priorities were so hopelessly askew.

In largely absenting himself from his narrative of his father's life, Edmund seems to offer a vindication of his claim that he was 'an unwelcome

apparition'. In reworking this passage for *Father and Son*, 'unwelcome' is toned down; his advent is now 'not welcomed but borne with resignation' (p. 38). The astonishing diary entry is retained, but now explained away as an example of his father's 'punctilio', for he was 'scrupulous in every species of arrangement', and the green swallow had arrived later in the day. As readers our attention is caught by the seemingly self-denying even-handedness of this judgement, its refusal to demonstrate anger. Gosse adds, however, a further detail which, uncannily, mirrors the events surrounding Thomas Hardy's birth: he had been laid aside as dead while all attention was turned to his mother.<sup>14</sup> An old woman, however, 'who happened to be there', attempted, successfully, to 'awake in me a spark of vitality' (p. 38). 'My father could not—when he told me this story—recollect the name of my preserver.' A man who was so punctilious in all his classificatory work and labelling of species could not give a name to the woman who had saved his son's life. Indignation is not expressed but left for the reader to supply. Gosse offers thanks to this woman who becomes, in his lavish gratitude, an alternative mother figure: one who cared sufficiently to give him life (p. 39).

Gosse's early life, however, was certainly not one of neglect but rather the reverse, as his parents focused their spiritual hopes upon him. He paints a surprisingly positive picture of their life together: his parents' frequent gaiety and his father's highly imaginative geography lessons using the furniture of the room (p. 48). The keynote of these chapters, nonetheless, is the inappropriate mode of his treatment and upbringing: his parents' failure to see him as a child, a failure further reinforced when his mother falls ill with cancer, and he, a mere child of 7, becomes her 'sole and ceaseless companion' and carer (p. 72). Noting the 'peculiar nature' of his experiences at this period, Gosse carefully records his shifting sense of time and the intensity of associative memories. Although he captures his yearning love for his mother, the final note is critical. On her deathbed, this 'holiest and purest of women' sealed his dedication to the Lord which had begun in his cradle: 'what a weight, intolerable as the burden of Atlas, to lay on the shoulders of a little fragile child!' (p. 81). His sense of the destructive consequences of her desires is all the more poignant for his acknowledgement of the purity of her motives. Like *Dombey*, so exposed and ridiculed in the opening of Dickens's novel, Gosse's parents see their infant as a vehicle for fulfilling and perfecting their own lives. The egotism might not be so apparent, but the effects are just as crushing: Edmund is almost,

like Paul, pressed out of life by the weight of parental expectation, which here carries the double authority of man and God.

Paradoxically, the death of Edmund's mother gives him access for the first time, he believes, to the domain of childhood. At Clifton, with his cousins, he experiences 'a brief interval of healthy, happy child-life, when my hard-driven soul was allowed to have, for a little while, no history' (p. 85), a phraseology which recalls Eliot's observation in *The Mill on the Floss* that 'the happiest women, like the happiest nations, have no history'.<sup>15</sup> Where Tom and Maggie are forced out of their timeless Eden of childhood by the bankruptcy of their father, Edmund, following an even greater trauma, is allowed brief ingress to a world outside time. Childhood, Eliot had noted, offers 'a strangely perspectiveless conception of life'.<sup>16</sup> Anthropologists and child study experts had focused alike on the ways in which 'savages' and children seemed to exist outside linear structures of time. Gosse similarly pays minute attention to his own shifting perceptions of time. While he appeared to have stepped outside of temporal pressures at Clifton, on his return to London he re-enters, only to be locked, frozen, in an unchanging present. Where external measures might record brief months, his memories of that period were of an almost unbearable timelessness: 'There was no past and no future for me, and the present felt as though it were sealed up in a Leyden jar. Even my dreams were interminable, and hung stationary from the nightly sky' (p. 85). The image of the Leyden jar captures his sense of himself as an object of experiment, while also reinforcing the picture of a forlorn child, locked out of normal life, with its face pressed against the windowpane, gazing out at the prohibited world outside.

Such stasis is broken by their move to Devon, where Gosse is able to record in a way not available, he notes, to that other great chronicler of childhood—William Wordsworth—the precise experience of a child on seeing the sea for the first time. It evoked in him a return to 'savage' notions of 'natural magic'—the belief that he could walk on water if he only drank some, 'a perfectly irrational movement of mind, like those of savages' (p. 101). Is there a further suggestion here that the Christian belief that Christ walked on water is yet another example of savage superstition? Edmund enters now into a new life with his father, aiding him in his explorations of the life of rock pools. It is also the time, however, of the disastrous publication of *Omphalos* (1857), in which Philip Gosse sought to combat the progressive model of development envisaged in Charles Lyell's theories of uniformitarian geology, and to

forestall the forthcoming evolutionary theories of Charles Darwin. In place of a world of constant change and transformation, he constructed an eternal present, imprinted by an imaginary past. It offers the ideational equivalent of Edmund's experience of childhood, held in suspension in a constant present, within his Leyden jar. Desperate to reconcile scientific evidence of species development with Scripture, Philip Gosse argued that when God created the world in six days, the life forms already bore evidence of their previous existence. He was subjected to ridicule from the press and dissent from his friend the clergyman and naturalist Charles Kingsley, who felt he was unable to believe 'that God has written on the rocks one enormous and superfluous lie for all mankind'.<sup>17</sup> The rigid defender of truth and opponent of all forms of fiction is himself convicted of weaving fantasies, and making God himself into an arch-deceiver.

Gosse, as an adult, shares this perspective. The father who banned Christmas, as a relic of a heathen past, and removed with such memorable violence the 'flesh of idols', or plum pudding, is himself shown to be regressing backwards into a form of primitive or 'savage' stage of belief. As Gosse announces at the opening of his text, 'Of the two human beings here described, one was born to fly backward, the other could not help being carried forward' (p. 35). The narrative constructs an inverse model of development. As Edmund gradually moves forward, from savage notions of natural magic to a full acceptance of experimental and evolutionary science, his father, already, as a Puritan, an anachronism in the nineteenth century, moves backwards down the developmental stages of mankind, into childish, or primitive, forms of unreasoning belief.

Such perspective only comes with hindsight, however. As a child, Gosse represents himself as often upset, baffled, or angered by his father's systems of belief and control, but his overwhelming sense is one of a yearning desire for closeness with his father. In one of the most haunting images in the book, Gosse depicts their explorations of rock pools:

Those pools were our mirrors, in which, reflected in the dark hyaline and framed by the sleek and shining fronds of oar-weed there used to appear the shapes of a middle-aged man and a funny little boy, equally eager, and, I almost find the presumption to say, equally well prepared for the business'. (p. 124).

The pool reflects not sky and world outside, but the union of father and son, caught in a moment of suspended time which is the very opposite of the sterile, solitary Leyden jar. Poised above the pool, the two generations are at

one with each other, and with the teeming, fairy kingdom revealed below. In this, the most lyrical section of the book, Edmund draws on his father's prose style. More than any other figure, Philip Gosse was responsible for creating, through his popular natural history books, the Victorian fascination with the beauties and hidden inner life of seaside rock pools. Although fiction was forbidden in the home, Philip's work was framed as a constant invitation to wonder and imagination. Thus he introduces *Evenings at the Microscope* (1859) as an exercise in fairy tale: 'Like the work of some mighty genie of Oriental fable, the brazen tube is the key that unlocks a world of wonder and beauty before invisible, which one who has once gazed upon it can never forget, and never cease to admire.'<sup>18</sup> Just as his father had awoken the imaginations of a whole generation of Victorians, unveiling for them the beauties of a hidden world, so here Edmund re-enacts his father's magic power. The 'fabulous' beauty was nonetheless delusive, he warns, for 'all that panoply would melt away, furled into the hollow rock, if we so much as dropped a pebble in to disturb the magic dream' (p. 24). The image of perfect beauty, held only for a moment, functions simultaneously as a description of the rock pool and the relations of father and son: the 'magic dream' is so easily dispelled.

A lament for lost beauty sets the elegiac tone of this section; the transitory beauty of the rock pool becomes in turn a metonymic expression of the subsequent transformation of Britain's shores:

The ring of living beauty drawn about our shores was a very thin and fragile one. . . . These rock-basins, fringed by corallines, filled with still water almost as pellucid as the upper air itself, thronged with beautiful sensitive forms of life,—they exist no longer, they are all profaned, and emptied, and vulgarised. (p. 125)

His father, Gosse suggests, was inadvertently responsible for this devastation: by stirring the public fascination with the seashore, he gave birth to the army of collectors who 'violated' the 'fairy paradise'. As in his relations with his son, Philip Gosse was well-intentioned, but his actions had devastating consequences. The whole section is underpinned by a sense of anger, that the beloved father had failed to preserve his son within this paradise of childhood.

Another way of reading, however, is to see Edmund as the figure who drops the pebble and disturbs the pellucid pool. Where his father had liked to fancy that Adam and Eve, 'stepping lightly down to bathe in the rainbow-coloured spray, would have seen identical sights that we now saw', Edmund

rewrites the narrative so that the 'fairy paradise' becomes 'the exquisite product of centuries of natural selection' (p. 125). For the atemporality of his father's peaceful Eden, he substitutes a process of constant change, founded on struggle. Whilst he longs for a recreation of his childhood union with his father, and for the comforting vision of an unchanging world, he turns, in an act of filial rebellion, to embrace Darwin's own rewriting of natural history texts, where admiration of perfected forms transmutes into the language of 'exquisite adaptations'.<sup>19</sup> Edmund's own process of adaptation is far from exquisite, however, and his narrative tends to focus less on survival than on loss, and damaging transmutation. In a further twist, his memoir, in the eyes of hostile reviewers, was the textual equivalent of the profaning and vulgarizing of the rock pool, opening up to the eyes of the multitude the hidden inner life of that 'good man', his father.<sup>20</sup> Following this perspective, the act of writing becomes itself one of violation.

Gosse's narrative is redolent with a sense of loss—loss of his union with his father, but also of the childhood he feels he never had. He presents himself constantly as a passive being, not the spirited child he would like to have been, figuring his powerlessness, as Michael Newton has noted, in feminine terms. Thus he is Andromeda chained to a rock, whilst watching his father on the seashore, or Princess Blanche fleur, waiting to be rescued from her tower.<sup>21</sup> Such an identification is made literal when, in one of the symbolic vignettes which structure the narrative, he is 'kidnapped', by the aptly named Mary Flaw, a woman whose wits had been 'détraquée' by 'disappointment in love' and who had 'crossed the barrier which divides the sane from the insane' (pp. 129–30). A firm admirer of his father, this damaged soul proceeds to follow all the forms of the Brethren's service, but at her own time and pace, thus offering a loving mockery of its processes. Her imitation becomes a subversive parody. Edmund blames himself for his 'kidnap': he catches her eye and nods, and 'the amazing deed was done' (pp. 131–2). In offering himself up to this similarly alienated soul, he participates in her innocent rebellion; although outwardly following the forms of his father's religion, his spirit is elsewhere.

Edmund's self-identification with the insane woman ushers in a renewed period of psychological disturbance, which is placed by the mature Gosse in the context of contemporary discussions on the role of imitation in child development. The distressing night-time visions of his childhood return, 'with a force and expansion due to my increased maturity'. He follows in



the tradition of Lamb and Martineau, offering a powerful description of his dreams when he ‘was bound hand and foot, and sent galloping through infinity’ (p. 133). The focus of his dreams, however, is unusual: he experiences ‘frenzied despair’ as he attempts, hopelessly, to attain the glowing red, pulsating letters spelling ‘CARMINE’, which alone can save him. For post-Freudians, his explanation of this dream might appear tame. Gosse attributes the pulsating red letters not to any sexual cause but to his attempts, in imitation of his father, to create ‘little monographs on seaside creatures’. Carmine, being very expensive, was the one colour he was forbidden to touch and was hence his ‘shibboleth of self-indulgence’ (p. 136). For such a critic of his father’s ‘iconoclastic literalism’, the analysis is itself engagingly literal.

Although one would not expect, at this period, a full-blown Freudian form of analysis, as James Sully’s essay, ‘The Dream as a Revelation’ (1893) suggests, dream analysis had nonetheless moved well beyond the simple associative model so prominent earlier in the century.<sup>22</sup> Gosse’s analysis in fact stands in a fascinating inverse relation to Freud’s interpretation of his own dream of a botanical monograph in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899). Where Gosse links the pulsating carmine to its obvious correlate in waking life, the illustrated plates within his monographs, Freud takes the seemingly innocuous dream of a botanical monograph and exposes the seething life beneath. His interpretation draws on childhood memories of destroying a book his father had given him, and more recent memories of a colleague laughing at a treatise he had produced with his own coloured plates, through various associative links to a disturbing conversation with a colleague.<sup>23</sup> Freud traces the processes of displacement and condensation at work to conclude that the dream of the monograph with its coloured plates might appear trivial, but it is ‘like the stillness of a field strewn with corpses, with no trace remaining of the battle that once raged’. His overall interpretation might aptly be applied to Gosse’s own, more explicit, dream, and indeed to his entire narrative: ‘Let us take the dream of the botanical monograph. . . . What corresponds to it in my thinking is a passionate and emotional plea for my freedom to act as I do and arrange my life in the way that seems right to me and me alone.’<sup>24</sup> Freud’s words find an echo in Gosse’s conclusion to his narrative: ‘he took a human being’s privilege to fashion his inner life for himself’ (p. 251). The young man, so desperately upset in childhood by his failing attempts to imitate and indeed become his father, strives in adulthood through writing his memoir to gain the freedom to arrange his own life.

Like Freud's own dream-image of the botanical monograph, Gosse's dream becomes a nodal point within the text as a whole, condensing the anxieties of a lifetime. Gosse, like Freud, establishes a suggestive framework for readerly analysis, proceeding by symbolic association and narrative juxtaposition to offer some form of interpretative map which might help explain why as a child he was so tortured in his dreams, or turned his imitative act of creating natural history monographs into a form of 'mania' (p. 148).<sup>25</sup> Like that other form of subversive imitator, Mary Flaw, Gosse strives to follow the forms established by his father, but his efforts produce not mere imitations but 'parodies' which were disturbing to his parent: 'If I had not been so innocent and solemn, he might have fancied I was mocking him' (p. 147).<sup>26</sup> Edmund's 'grotesque monographs' and 'solemn and ridiculous imitations of Papers read before the Linnaean Society' help to initiate a major change in his life, 'a revolution in domestic policy', as his alarmed father now starts to encourage his association with other young people (p. 148).

The issue of imitation was one which was central to child study. James Baldwin, for example, in *Mental Development in the Child and the Race* (1894), had included lengthy sections on 'organic' and 'conscious' imitation. Sully was also preoccupied with this issue, particularly in relation to child art. Child play was founded on imitation, he argued, and indeed one could see in the 'imitative sympathy' which underpinned it the foundations of morality.<sup>27</sup> In his lengthy study of 'The Young Draughtsman', Sully explored the development of child art within an evolutionary perspective, examining the relations between child and savage art. The first efforts, he concluded, were guided by imitation and tradition, and only later did the child develop 'a freer individual initiative' and aesthetic sense.<sup>28</sup> Although Sully insists firmly on the imitative basis of all early art, he is torn between his strong commitment to imitation as the foundation of child behaviour and his equally strong adherence to more Romantic notions of the child as a deeply imaginative being, and to what he terms, in his chapter 'The Child as Artist', the 'alchemy of the child's imagination'.<sup>29</sup> A similar split is evident in the responses of Philip Gosse. Although his life appears to be dedicated to creating in his child an imitation of himself, he was nonetheless touched by what Edmund describes as the 'originality heresy', and urged him not to copy, 'but to go out into the garden or the shore, and describe something new, in a new way' (p. 147). At issue is the question of whether a child, in its early stages of development, can describe or create 'something new'.

Edmund himself claims that his imitative activities were ‘healthy’ and inveighs against the rage for originality of his era, when ‘children are not considered promising, unless they attempt things preposterous and unparalleled’ (p. 146). One can trace here the lineaments of the ‘precocity’ debates (Gosse had earlier insisted that although his first word was ‘book’, and he had been an early reader, ‘I was not at all precocious’ (p. 47)). Despite the unusual conditions in which he was brought up, Gosse seems almost over-eager, at this point, to emphasize the normality of his personal development. The clash with his father over the issue of imitation highlights once more the question of appropriateness with reference to the stages of child development. Faced with his son’s slavish imitation of himself, Philip Gosse is forced to confront the consequences of his own desires: self-replication, when offered in miniature, is disturbing. In striving so hard to be like his father, Edmund produces a ‘ludicrous pastiche’ or grotesque parody.

The distinction to be drawn is between imitation as a natural stage of early first development and imitation as a self-conscious effort, spurred on by parental desire. Elsewhere in the text Gosse makes clear that his father was no respecter of normative models of development. Like *Dombey*, Philip Gosse had always wished to see his son not as a child, but as a man. From early on, Edmund comments, he had failed to leave ‘Nature alone’ but had been ‘in a tremendous hurry to push on my spiritual growth’. Like a spiritual Dr Blimber he had fed him ‘theological meat which it was impossible for me to digest’ (p. 92). Such urgency culminates in his decision that Edmund, at the age of 10, is ready to be received into the Communion of Saints—a privilege normally reserved for adulthood. All the questions concerning appropriate expectations with regard to development, and the staged processes of child growth, are crystallized and focused in the narrative in the account of Edmund’s baptism, which was, he remarks, ‘the central event of my whole childhood. Everything, since the earliest dawn of consciousness seemed to have been leading up to it. Everything, afterwards, seemed to be leading down away from it’ (p. 156).

Although they might appear arcane now, the nineteenth-century debates surrounding infant baptism addressed some of the key issues underpinning competing theories of child development, and indeed mirrored to some degree discussions of child insanity. The Plymouth Brethren were opposed to infant baptism, holding that the abandonment of the soul to the Spirit of Christ had to be a voluntary deed which hence ‘presupposed a full and rational consciousness of the relations of things’ which could only be achieved by one

'who was fully capable of independent thought' (p. 152). Just as alienists in the early part of the century had argued that children could not be insane since they had not yet achieved a state of rationality from which to depart, so the Brethren maintained that the child could not make a gift of its soul until it was capable of making an informed decision. At issue is the nature of child intelligence, and whether a child, even in an advanced state of intellectual precocity, could ever attain a state equivalent to that of adult understanding.

In his desire to see Edmund enter the Communion of Saints at the tender age of 10, Philip Gosse represents an extreme form of the parent who is convinced that his own child is a prodigy, one who breaks all normative rules and achieves a state of mind usually reserved for adulthood. The moment of conversion, Philip maintained, could occur for certain 'precociously selected spirits' in childhood, and, intriguingly, might be neither recorded 'nor even recollected' (p. 153). Although Philip Gosse would clearly like to have declared by fiat that his son had achieved a state of grace, it was undoubtedly necessary to offer some form of demonstration to his doubting congregation. While other proud, or ambitious, fathers paraded their intellectually precocious sons around Europe, from royal courts to lowly English fairgrounds, Philip merely permits Edmund to be examined by the leading elders of his congregation. The result is a triumphant success, where Edmund 'testified my faith in the atonement with a fluency that surprised myself' (p. 155). Writing in retrospect, however, he is quite clear that such fluency was the result of his 'imitative faculty' achieving the upper hand (p. 150), and nothing to do with his spiritual state. The terms of analysis are those employed in child studies and early animal psychology. Samuel Wilks, for example, was convinced that his vocal parrot was exhibiting the same imitative qualities as a child acquiring speech.<sup>30</sup> Romanes similarly extolled the abilities of monkeys to understand words and imitate the actions of mankind: the distinction between monkey and adult human usage would rest on the degree of understanding and self-consciousness they brought to the task.<sup>31</sup> Gosse is clear that his precocious fluency in the outer signs of language bore no relation to inner understanding. His father, he remarks, with reference to wayward members of his congregation, 'was powerless against a temporary sincerity, the simulacrum of a true change of heart' (p. 163). Edmund's own case is analogous: he presented a mere simulacrum of true piety or adult understanding. Despite his father's fervent hopes, in body, years, and mind he was still a child, but one whose imitative faculties were intensely developed.

The mixture of paternal and spiritual pride driving Philip Gosse was exacerbated, his son suggests, by his desire to ‘secure me finally, exhaustively, before the age of puberty could dawn, before my soul was fettered with the love of carnal things’ (p. 150). Philip’s vaunted belief in his son’s election was clearly no match for his very Victorian fear of the disruptive sexual energies of puberty and adolescence. A parroted version of the adult language of faith, coupled to the purity deemed to adhere to the ignorance of childhood, was clearly preferable to an untrammelled entry into the dangers of adolescent sexuality. Although seemingly other-worldly in outlook, Philip Gosse’s fears place him, touchingly, within the common ranks of the Victorian middle-class parent, eager to control and inhibit within their offspring the first stirrings of sexual desire.

The scene of the baptism itself functions as a reworking of the rock pool vignette. Edmund gazes down into the depths and sees, not himself amidst the waving fronds, but a young woman waving her arms, her figure held upright in the water by air underneath her crinoline ‘which was blown out like a bladder in some extravagant old fashion-plate’ (p. 158). She is a form of monstrous sea creature, of the kind Edmund had so painfully constructed in his illustrated monographs, an invented species which disrupts his father’s careful ordering of the submarine world. Although the scene is one of outward contrast between the seemingly controlled ‘adult’ male child and the hysterical young woman, she functions, like that other subversive female, Mary Flaw, as an alter ego for Gosse. The extravagant, outward forms of her hysteria are matched by the young Edmund’s inner repression. It hardly seemed normal, he comments, ‘that so young a child should appear so receptive and so apt’ (p. 150). The observation belongs to the more permissive attitudes to childhood to be found at the close of the century. In Sully’s account of childhood, collisions with parents were ‘perfectly normal’ in the early years: ‘We should not care to see a child give up his inclinations at another’s bidding without some little show of resistance. These conflicts are frequent and sharp in proportion to the vigour and sanity of the child. The best children, best from a biological point of view, have, I think, most of the rebel in them.’<sup>32</sup> Edmund never possessed vigour, and his utter quiescence sounds a warning note with reference to his mental health. Whilst at the time of his childhood his passive mimicry of adult forms was greeted with a mixture of suspicion, puzzlement, and acclaim, by the end of the century such behaviour became a clear indication of mental disturbance, a deviation from what was now regarded as the rebellious norm of childhood.

Although Edmund had looked forward to his baptism in the belief that it would offer him new status, and go some way to end the inequity of power between himself and his father, it quickly becomes clear that he has entered, not a new era of freedom, but even greater bondage. The system of surveillance his father creates goes well beyond the paternal or divine all-seeing eye, encompassing now a world of unseen peers. His father 'used to draw dreadful pictures of suppositious little boys who were secretly watching me from afar, and whose whole career, in time and in eternity, might be disastrously affected if I did not keep my lamp burning' (p. 162). Faced with this burden of surveillance, stretching not only across time but into eternity, he credits his psychological survival to his hidden inner self, created when he first deceived his parents, 'that existence of two who could speak to one another in inviolable secrecy' (p. 168), and to his discovery of fiction.

Writing at a time when imagination was seen as the natural element of the child, Gosse is at pains to portray the extraordinary effects on a child mind, brought up without any exposure to fiction, when his father presented him with a picaresque romance by Michael Scott: 'It was like giving a glass of brandy neat to someone who had never been weaned from a milk diet' (p. 171). Without *Tom Cringle's Log*, his soul, shut up like Fatima in its tower, 'might really have been starved to death, or have lost the power of recovery and rebound, if my captor, by some freak not yet perfectly accounted for, had not gratuitously opened a little window in it and added a powerful telescope' (p. 172). The feminized image is one of stiflement and confinement; of a selfhood so thoroughly suppressed that the only outcome would be complete mental breakdown. He retains his sanity, he suggests, due to the telescope of fiction, opening up vistas of alternative worlds, to counteract the intensity of his father's microscopic vision. It is significant that in reimagining his life with his father he eschews the freedom offered by the fictional form, the path taken by his contemporary Samuel Butler in *The Way of All Flesh*, in order to offer, dutifully, a memoir which, he insists, is 'scrupulously true' (p. 33).<sup>33</sup>

In the concluding sections of the memoir, Gosse charts the growing confusions in his adolescent mind, exacerbated by his reading, where 'Jesus and Pan held sway together', culminating in his feverish new form of natural magic when in a state of ecstatic fervour he calls upon Jesus to come, to be answered only by silence, and the mundane tinkling of the teabell (p. 235). Gosse had designed this disillusioning, bathetic note as the conclusion to his narrative, but at his publisher's request he was induced to

add an 'Epilogue' which offers another final scene.<sup>34</sup> Amidst the 'enervating' air, intoxicating perfumes, and voluptuous orchids of his father's hothouse, a 'violent and hysterical' Edmund rejects his father's hold upon him. The scene is far from accurate in biographical terms, since Edmund continued to correspond closely with his father on religious matters for some time to come, but it clearly possesses a satisfying symbolic significance. The hothouse, as in *Dombey and Son*, captures his enforced and over-rapid growth, whilst the voluptuousness of the flowers gestures obliquely to the domain of sexuality, which Gosse, unlike Meredith, has kept out of his account of adolescent development.

The memoir now concludes with Gosse's declaration that he was forced to throw off 'the yoke of his "dedication"', and, as respectfully as he could, without parade or remonstrance, he took a human being's privilege to fashion his inner life for himself' (p. 251). Like his earlier, quite startling, claim that the adage 'the child is father of the man' was not borne out by his own life (p. 216), the statement is touching in its heroic misguidedness, offering a chimerical belief in the possibilities of self-fashioning. In his life of his father, Edmund had depicted the arrival of evolutionary theory, and the general rejection of his father's work, in terms that mirror those of his own liberation:

The human mind was preparing for a great crisis of emancipation, of relief from a fettering order of ideas no longer tenable or endurable, and no one was concerned to give even fair play to a piece of reasoning, such as *Omphalos*, whose whole purpose was to bind again those very cords out of which the world was painfully struggling.<sup>35</sup>

In rejecting his father's religion, and demands upon himself, he is following, in his own mind, the great imaginative revolution unleashed by evolutionary theory. The brave new world of Darwin, however, was not one that permitted self-fashioning. Although Gosse has minimized the role of heredity in his text, it is clear to all his readers that he is nonetheless a creature utterly shaped by his history and environment. Just as Hannah Lynch's *Autobiography of a Child* had shown how one is always the child of one's parents, so *Father and Son* reveals Edmund caught forever in his role as 'Son'.

*Father and Son* was published to great acclaim in 1907. The reviewer for the *Athenaeum* was quick to place it in the context of the child study movement: 'It is at once a profound and illuminating study in the concrete of the development of a child's mind, and also an historical document of

great value.<sup>36</sup> The text was steeped in the science of its time, both the science of childhood of the *fin de siècle* and the struggle between natural history and evolutionary biology which dominated his youth. Gosse himself was keen to portray his book as almost an epitaph for the Victorian age. 'This book', he announced in his polemical opening, 'is the record of a struggle between two temperaments, two consciences and almost two epochs' (p. 35). Generational conflict becomes a metonymical expression of a wider, fundamental shift between Victorianism and the spirit of a more modern age which for Gosse was identified with the imaginative, expansive, theories of the new biology.<sup>37</sup> Throughout the text, Philip Gosse's narrowness in religion is identified with that of his science. His was a mind 'all logical and positive without breadth, without suppleness and without imagination'. As a collector of facts, he was unrivalled; 'his very absence of imagination aided him in his work' (p. 113). He was neither a true biologist nor philosopher since 'He saw everything through a lens, nothing in the immensity of nature' (p. 123). With his 'telescope' of fiction, and close embrace of the world of the imagination, Edmund sets himself apart from his father. It is noticeable, however, that some of the most telling images of his self-description are drawn from his father's natural history.

The distorted quality of Edmund's mental development, where 'portions of my intellect were growing with unwholesome activity, while others were stunted' is figured as that of 'a plant on which a pot has been placed, with the effect that the centre is crushed and arrested, while shoots are straggling up to the light on all sides' (p. 211). Most tellingly, when told he will have to leave and move to London, he feels like one of his father's 'speckled soldier-crabs' who, having lost their 'whelk-habitations, trailed about a pale and soft body in search of another house, visibly broken-hearted' (p. 229). The anthropomorphism is arresting: Gosse is clearly trailing this soft body still, a damaged creature in his father's aquarium. For many reviewers, Gosse's text offered a terrifying tale of a disfigured childhood, a story, in Frederic Harrison's eyes, 'of rank cruelty and almost insanity'.<sup>38</sup> It is nonetheless a text that participates in the yearning nostalgia for childhood that emerges in the 1890s, both in fiction for children and the new science of childhood. An investment is created in an idea of childhood, rarely experienced, but cherished with an indefinable sense of loss. For Gosse, that yearning centres on the image of the rock pool, when father and son are held in perfect union, poised above the 'fairy paradise' below. Such rock pools have vanished, however, their visions of beauty replaced by that of the damaged,



homeless soldier crab. The image of the child constructed in the 1890s was that of an imaginative spirit, a wellspring of authenticity, as yet unconstrained by the strictures of the adult world. In *Father and Son*, by contrast, we are offered an account of mental distortion rather than growth, of stunted plants and damaged creatures, where the free play of imagination is supplanted by a 'mania' for imitation. It is a tale of unnatural history. The final two chapters of this work explore contrasting fictional representations of 'unnatural' childhood.

## Childhood as Performance: *What Maisie Knew*

Henry James's 1897 novel *What Maisie Knew* shares with the autobiographies of the period, and the practitioners of child psychology, a desire to map the growth of a child's mind. In his first contribution to child study, Stanley Hall had published an article on 'The Content of Children's Minds'. It was an attempt to chart, through statistical surveys, how much young children entering school knew: how many facts about the world they had absorbed.<sup>1</sup> James takes the question and utterly transforms it. His novel is an exploration of what it might mean for a child to 'know'. Whilst Hall was concerned with quantifiable 'content'—how many children, for example, could identify a sheep or cow—James shows how even an understanding of objects is mediated through a complex network of emotional relations. The child at the heart of his novel is a complex sensitivity, vibrating in response to the demands placed upon her by the adults who dominate her landscape. No object is perceived in isolation; every hat, tree, or table plays its role in her development only as part of a wider emotional drama in which Maisie struggles to play her part. Where Hannah Lynch speaks of 'unconscious acting' on the part of the child, James, more radically, suggests that childhood itself becomes, for his heroine, a form of performance.

In debates on methodology, members of the child study movement often expressed concerns that children, from too much questioning, might become too self-conscious, and hence not natural. James paints a scenario where the category of 'natural' is a fond delusion, where a child is constantly subject to observation and spends her life trying to anticipate what form of response or behaviour is desired, or indeed required. In Maisie's case such observation can be utterly self-centred and manipulative, as in the example set by her parents, or more benign, as shown by her companion and

governess Mrs Wix, but both absolutely and irrevocably shape the development of her mind and emotions. At a time when fiction for children was increasingly focusing on a world where children could exist in a realm of their own imagination, free from adult restraint, James suggests through his novel that children are utterly defined by the adults who frame their lives. Both the scientific and fictional ideals of 'natural' childhood which can be observed or represented impartially are shown to be misplaced: scientific observation does not start with an untainted subject, but merely extends the process of transformative scrutiny to which a child has been subjected throughout its life.

Even more than Lynch's heroine, Maisie is exposed from an early age to the violence of her parents' attentions. These are not the supportive parents envisaged by the child study movement, eager to trace each stage of development in their child's mind, but rather utterly selfish and corrupt figures who wanted Maisie, following their divorce, 'not for any good they could do her, but for the harm they could, with her unconscious aid, do each other'.<sup>2</sup> The question of Maisie's unconsciousness lies at the heart of the book. James in his subsequent preface addressed his methodology; he quickly discarded his idea of focusing on what the child 'might be conceived to have *understood*' and instead concentrated on 'what my wondering witness materially and inevitably *saw*' (p. 5). Her own conclusions, however, would not be allowed to stand alone, 'our own commentary constantly attends and amplifies'. James suggests that it is Maisie's 'activity of spirit' which determines the narrative; 'we simply take advantage of these things better than she herself' and note things of interest to her 'in figures that are not yet at her command' (p. 6). The issue is one faced by all autobiographers trying to capture their thoughts and feelings in early childhood (and indeed, *Maisie* can be seen as a trial run for James's own semi-autobiography, *A Small Boy and Others* (1907), which has a similar distancing effect, with childhood perception mediated through an adult consciousness, who looks out on the 'small boy' as a distinctly separate figure).<sup>3</sup>

Frances Hodgson Burnett had suggested that she was placing her childhood feelings in adult words 'without the slightest difficulty'; the structures of feeling could be mapped directly into adult language. James is equally keen to insist on childhood complexity: 'Small children have many more perceptions than they have terms to translate them; their vision is at any moment much richer, their apprehension even constantly stronger, than their prompt, their at all producible, vocabulary' (p. 8). In this he shares with

his brother, William James, an impatience with various strands of child psychology which linked understanding of the development of the mind too closely to language so that, in William's example, 'A child will be assumed without self-consciousness because he talks of himself in the third person'.<sup>4</sup> Henry James, however, does not entirely follow Burnett's line that the apprehension was there, but not the language. Rather, he suggests that the adult narrator extends and amplifies the understanding of the child. The formulation, and methodology, leave open the question of the precise relationship between the perceptions of the child and the understanding of the adult narrator, leading to the position where James can end his text with a return to the problem of how we interpret what Maisie 'knew'. Maisie is the centre of consciousness of the text, yet she eludes readerly penetration, just as she confounds the attempts of her manipulative parents or carers to control her perceptions and growth of understanding.

In rewriting earlier material for his *Studies of Childhood*, Sully added a new section on the problems of reproducing in later life the incidents of childhood: 'All recalling of past experiences illustrates the modifying influence of the later self in its attempt to assimilate and understand the earlier self; and this transforming effect is at its maximum when we try to get back to childhood.' He suggests, however, that the difficulty experienced with reference to one's own memories is obviated with reference to studying other children, since the memories, although inaccurate and modified by one's later sense of self with reference to personal experience, will nonetheless 'be sufficiently strong for the purposes of interpreting our observations of the children we see about us'.<sup>5</sup> James avoids the fictional autobiographical form with all its pitfalls, adopting instead, like Sully, a combination of observation and imaginative, empathic, interpretation. He is less sanguine than Sully, however, about the results: it is important to his method that Maisie always eludes our grasp.

James's famous circumlocutory style, used so often to render the ways in which adult consciousness and speech moves in patterns of avoidance, takes on new significance in representing childhood. Here his obfuscatory mode is directed not to highlighting the lacunae in adult thought processes, or the deliberately unsaid of social conversation, but rather to rendering the ways in which a child might, in James's phrase, 'grope' towards dimly perceived understandings which lie outside her powers of articulation. Maisie's name is significant, pointing to the idea of being 'mazed', or confused, perplexed, or bewildered, often, as the *OED* points out, 'with some notion of a

figurative maze or labyrinth'. James draws on these figurative resonances to represent the difficulties Maisie experiences in both apprehending, and adjusting to, her bewildering circumstances. She quickly comes to learn that 'life was like a long, long corridor with rows of closed doors', each with 'something behind it', but it was wisest 'not to knock' at these doors since it seemed only to excite adult derision (p. 36).

Perhaps less threateningly, the idea of the maze also comes to represent the inner state of her mind, and growing processes of comprehension. James suggests, interestingly, that understanding, for a child, can be a retrospective process, thus images and words hang in her mind until she can attach 'the meaning for which these things had waited'. She thus finds in her mind a collection of 'images and echoes kept for her in the childish dusk, the dim closet, the high drawers, like games she wasn't yet big enough to play' (p. 20). The internal geography of her mind thus replicates the daunting, darkened interior of a middle-class home, with its secret places and potentialities held out of reach of the questing child. The maze through which she carefully threads her way is thus both internal and external, encompassing the immediate and pressing demands of her chaotic familial life, and a constant renegotiation of her past history, stored in a jumble of 'images and echoes' which only gradually lend themselves to interpretation. James's model of mind is thus one where all experience is absorbed but generally held suspended, outside the realm of comprehension. A narrator is presented to the reader who tries to act as a guide through the maze, whilst always drawing back from elucidating what understanding or attribution of meaning has finally been achieved by the child. What is clear is that opening those inaccessible drawers, or finally playing that hidden game, will not be a pleasant experience, as Maisie comes to understand more of the selfishness and egotism of her parents, and step-parents, and the power struggles which underpin the adult realm of 'games'. Where Sully represents the child as full of awe, wonder, and amazement, inhabiting a world of endless possibilities and potentiality for play, James takes the more negative interpretation of maze, and places his child in a dreary, baffling labyrinth, which she will learn to negotiate with skill, but never escape.

James's statement in his preface that he will focus not on what the child understands but on what she sees is somewhat misleading. He limits the attention of the narrative to scenes that Maisie witnesses, but sight is not particularly the dominant organizational category of her experience. For this child so starved of affection, touch is at least as important. Maisie is

forever being patted, prodded, and pushed, and learns quickly to interpret this language of gesture: 'from the first, such pats and pulls had struck her as the steps and signs of other people's business and even a little as the wriggle or the overflow of their difficulties' (p. 158). Even the comforting gesture of the hand laid upon the arm can be seen less as a sign of affection or concern for her than as an easier language of control for the adults to adopt as they attempt to circumnavigate their own problematic circumstances without resorting to the less trustworthy medium of overt speech.

Maisie remains, despite her sophisticated understanding of the language of bodily gesture, eagerly responsive to all possible displays of affection. Thus her father, on the infamous night of the visit to the Earl's Court Exhibition, manipulates her into heroically letting him go by first taking her on his knee and stroking her hair. Her mother, following Maisie and Sir Claude to Folkestone, similarly tries to manipulate Maisie by 'gracefully' drawing her to her, and 'patting the child into conformities unspeakable'. The language is that of the narrator, acting as an appalled spectator, watching whilst Ida attempts to overcome Maisie's resistance, drawing on the bodily rhetoric of maternal tenderness to 'pat' her child, rather like a mud cake, into conformity with her deeply unmaternal wishes. The scene replicates that with the father: the object is not to retain the child but rather to engineer a 'graceful' exit from the role and responsibilities of parent. Maisie this time is less responsive, and registers acutely the unspoken agenda. She feels she 'had never been so irrevocably parted with as in the pressure of possession now supremely exerted by Ida's long-gloved and much-bangled arm' (p. 164).

Maisie's world is one where even the language of the senses can lie. The 'pressure of possession', enacted gracefully but uncomfortably by the 'much-bangled arm', is in fact a gesture of rejection. The bangles themselves, symbols of Ida's preference for the role of sexual commodity rather than mother, recall the earlier scene when Ida, encountered in the park dallying with the Captain, mutters the first maternal endearment Maisie can recall before clutching her to her breast, 'where, amid a wilderness of trinkets, she felt as if she had suddenly been thrust, with a smash of glass, into a jeweller's shop-front' (p. 118). She is then pushed sharply away and ordered to go to the Captain. The order, following so swiftly on Maisie's violent, bewildering entry into a world of embraces bought and sold, reinforces the reader's sense not only of the atmosphere of moral corruption in which the child lives, but also the unstated, menacing idea of sexual threat, of her potential fate should she stay with her mother.

Twenty years earlier, in *Daniel Deronda*, George Eliot had created in Lapidoth a father who was quite capable of selling his daughter, whilst in the previous decade, the campaigning journalist, W. T. Stead, had focused huge media attention on the problem of child prostitution, or the 'maiden tribute of Babylon'.<sup>6</sup> Knowledge of children sold or corrupted would inevitably form part of the reader's framework of understanding in the 1890s: the question of what Maisie 'knew' is thus one of readerly anxiety, focused in this case on how far, and in what terms, Maisie understands the sexual and moral corruption around her.

The prurient issue of physical knowledge, how far a child might be said to know or understand what happens behind closed bedroom doors, is for James far less of an issue, however, than the effects on her emotional development and intelligence of such undesirable immersion. James keeps Maisie's age in the vague penumbra which envelops her. We learn she is 6 at the start of the narrative, and that two years pass, at one point, but her precise age at the close, when she is probably just pre-pubescent, hovering between childhood and first emergence into womanhood, is kept deliberately opaque. Maisie unquestionably develops a romantic passion for the dashing Sir Claude, and is willing, at the end, to sacrifice Mrs Wix and all other ties in order to run away with him, as she breathlessly begs him to 'preppy' the railway tickets which will lead to their elopement. Although the following year, in writing *Turn of the Screw*, James leaves the physical innocence of Miles and Flora open to conjecture, in this text he is concerned to show not only that Maisie is not sexually compromised, but that, despite her romantic attachments and desires, she possesses a form of almost radiant innocence.<sup>7</sup> It is clear, nonetheless, that her gender is crucial to the story; Sir Claude would not have battled for her if she had been a boy, and he undoubtedly plays upon her attraction to him in his attempts to extricate himself from his problematic entanglements. Thus when Mrs Wix offers herself in service, if he will only leave Mrs Beale, he turns in confusion to the 'more than filial gaze of his intelligent little charge'. Once again, bodily language replaces the verbal. Even if Maisie 'was still a child she was yet of the sex that could help him out. He signified as much by a renewed invitation to an embrace. She freshly sprang to him and again they inaudibly conversed' (p. 204). Maisie is both innocent and complicit; willingly responsive to the male touch even if it issues out of cowardice.

In his scientific writings on childhood, Sully constantly celebrated the qualities of childhood innocence and imagination, wondering at one point

'how mothers can bring themselves to lose one drop of the exhilarating draught which daily pours forth from the fount of a child's fantasy'.<sup>8</sup> The image is almost vampiric, of adult rejuvenation through absorption of child life. James places such rejuvenation in a more disturbing light. Sir Claude asserts, no doubt rightly, that Maisie is 'the best thing' (p. 255) he has ever known, but the sentiment is delivered as part of a self-interested act of coercion as he attempts to make her give up Mrs Wix. In the final, appalling, climactic scene, where the struggle over ownership of Maisie and what she represents is enacted in almost violent, physical terms, his claims rise to a new height. Against Mrs Wix's assertion that he has killed Maisie's moral sense he replies, "'on the contrary I think I've produced life. . . it's the most beautiful thing I've ever met—it's exquisite, it's sacred'" (p. 268). The self-delusion is extraordinary: at the point when he is preparing to relinquish Maisie, out of sheer weakness and inability to defend himself from the predations of the older, sexualized woman, Mrs Beale, he casts himself in a god-like, maternal role, actively creating the 'sacred' innocence of Maisie. Constructions of the 'sacred' domain of childhood, James suggests, have little to do with the children themselves but serve, rather, the needs of their elders. Just as Maisie, by her physical presence, functioned unwittingly to render the liaison of Sir Claude and Mrs Beale 'proper', so the idea of their relation serves Sir Claude's emotional needs, bolstering his self-image and diminishing, in his own eyes, the ignoble qualities of his negotiations.

Touch once more plays a determining role in this concluding scene. In response to Sir Claude's pats, Maisie makes her vehement, but powerless, declaration of love, "'I love Sir Claude—I love *him*'" (p. 272). In response, she feels his hands on her shoulders and intuits 'the fine surrender in them', where 'fine' registers both Maisie's almost heroic capacity for moral admiration, even at the point of her own abandonment, and the narrator's more cynical judgement of Sir Claude's stage management of the scene. As in the parting with Ida, the pressure of possession is actually one of desertion, interpreted with subtlety by the precociously tutored child. Maisie's intellectual education is a subject of constant postponement within the novel, but such lack is compensated, James suggests, by a disturbingly overdeveloped emotional intelligence, capable of reading the import of the slightest signs or gestures. Maisie is not 'over-pressured' in an educational sense, but like that other enigmatic figure of 1890s childhood, Hardy's little Father Time, she is a child who has ceased to be a child.



Hardy famously represented Father Time in *Jude the Obscure* (1895) as 'Age masquerading as Juvenility'.<sup>9</sup> James does not follow Hardy's theories of evolutionary memory, but he does suggest that for his heroine, childhood itself is a matter of performance or masquerade, and innocence a commodity to be produced on demand. James seizes on the notion put forward by Sully and other child theorists that childhood is the 'age of imagination' and that the child lives solely, and intensely, in the present. Maisie, he notes early on, 'was at the age for which all stories are true, and all conceptions are stories. The actual was the absolute, the present alone was vivid' (p. 22). Such a conception is introduced, however, only to be overturned. A 'moral revolution' is accomplished in the depths of her nature at the point when past and present coalesce, old forms and phrases take on new meanings, and she starts to understand 'the strange office she filled' (p. 22). Such understanding corresponds, simultaneously, to the discovery of an inner self, and the adoption of an explicit strategy of concealment.

Like Edmund in *Father and Son*, Maisie comes to an awareness of self at the very point that she discovers the possibilities of concealment from the adults who surround her. Maisie's creative energies are to be lavished not on imagined lands, but on cultivating an appearance of stupidity. Whilst the psychologists were busily marking each step taken in the progress of a child's mental development, a process which was assumed to be both linear and non-problematic, James portrays his heroine as embarking on a career of deceit, in which she explicitly conceals her capacity for understanding. Maisie thus feels pleasure when her system takes effect and 'she began to be called a little idiot' (p. 23). This is a form of 'acquired idiocy' not imagined by Carter. In her 'doom of a peculiar passivity' (p. 90) Maisie absents herself from her own history, and instead seizes on the roles she is required to play that map the negative aspects of childhood or 'primitive' innocence. In practising the 'pacific art of stupidity' she quickly achieves, in James's biting phrase, 'a hollowness beyond her years' (p. 63) as she strives to destroy any appearance of wisdom or psychological depth.

In place of the joyous immediacy of childhood experience celebrated in the child psychology of the era, James portrays distance and absence. The system of class exclusion made so memorable in the tale of the little match girl becomes a metaphor for the ways in which this middle-class child is made a spectator of her own life. She has an 'odd air of being present at her history in as separate a manner as if she could only get at experience by flattening her nose against a pane of glass' (pp. 91-2). In operating her systematic performance

of childhood, Maisie is 'doomed', in James's phrase, to passivity, to a form of self-sacrifice made literal in a most disturbing way, as she ceases to identify with the self of her own experience. Locked into her strategic system, she can never initiate, only respond, and that only in ways which reinforce her parents' wishes for an imperceptive idiocy in their offspring. Yet, such determined imbecility also evokes anger from her parents and step-parents, who would prefer selective imperceptivity. Even Sir Claude is angered by her inability to give any account of the Captain after their encounter in the park, since, as James comments, 'It was the essence of her method not to be silly by halves' (p. 126). On this occasion her beloved Sir Claude bundles her away roughly, without a parting look, but she experiences, perversely, 'the sweet sense of success' such as she had felt, when, on returning from her father's and encountering Ida on the stairs 'she had met a fierce question of her mother's with an imbecility as deep and had in consequence been dashed by Mrs Farange almost to the bottom' (p. 127). The brief throwaway line is disturbing on a number of levels. Physical violence is part of Maisie's upbringing, but, as its narrative placement here suggests, was as nothing compared to the psychological violence inflicted on the child by these parents who use her only for their own ends, as a pawn in their battles. Maisie takes her pleasure perversely, not from the exercise of spontaneity, or the exchange of affection, but from the success of her deceitful stratagems which ensure her own alienation.

Victorian culture, as I have suggested, was obsessed by the horror of the lie. James, however, offers his readers a sympathetic portrait of a child who constructs her entire life as a form of lie, realizing that this is what is required of her. Maisie not only attempts to hide any understanding or knowledge, but enters eagerly into any performative lie the occasion might seem to demand. Thus in the scene where her father tries to extricate himself, without seeming to do so, from their relationship, she waits expectantly for his lead: 'She would have pretended with ecstasy if he could only have given her the cue' (p. 144). She has become, indeed, more adept at the social intricacies of performance than that dissolute socialite, her father. Even the kindly Mrs Wix is similarly demanding, as she too imposes her own developmental model on Maisie, wanting her to progress from primitive amorality to the first stages of the moral sense that she believes will be evidenced by the emergence of jealousy. To please her, Maisie lays claim to a jealousy of Mrs Beale she does not feel, reinforcing her position with an even more extreme statement: 'Maisie met her expression as if it were a

game with forfeits for winking. "I'd *kill* her!" That at least, she hoped as she looked away, would guarantee her moral sense' (p. 221). In this inverse evolutionary fable, Maisie learns to be a child, to adopt the poses of stupidity, pretence, and amorality often associated with childhood or primitive races, but in reality shown working at their highest power amidst the corrupt adults whose world she inhabits. In her eagerness to instil in Maisie some 'moral sense', the well-intentioned Mrs Wix only compounds the errors, as Maisie is stimulated into uttering her most immoral sentiments in the text.

In the final bewildering scenes, Maisie feels as if she has been given 'an impossible sum on a slate' (p. 259). She inhabits an Alice in Wonderland realm, but without the possibility of snapping her fingers or dispelling her oppressors; she cannot escape the sum, nor invert or control the pressures of time. She wanders instead, blindly, around town, hand in hand with Sir Claude, in 'her mute resistance to time'. Even her leaps of imagination are those of the adult world, as she envisages the two of them, in terms appropriate to an adulterous liaison, 'established in a little place in the South' (pp. 259-60). The talk is all of freedom, and choice, 'Can you choose freely?' her stepfather demands (p. 255). The answer, of course, is no. Even where Maisie does assert her desires they are ignored, overruled, and misinterpreted. Freedom of choice demands a unified selfhood, unconflicted desires, and an arena which will permit the exercise of such choice. Maisie has none of these: her tale is the reverse of a *Bildungsroman*. Whilst still a child she is landed with the impossible burden of reconciling the sum of all the contradictory wishes of the adults around her. It is up to her to make the decision which will set her step-parents 'free' to enjoy the acrimony of their sexual liaison, whilst she demotes herself, once more, to a mere child in the charge of her homely governess.

Edmund Gosse was to end his memoir with the image of the young Edmund throwing off his yoke and taking 'a human being's privilege to fashion his inner life for himself'. For readers of the text, his optimistic faith in the possibilities of self-creation seems misguided. James, by contrast, leaves his readers in no doubt of the irony of Maisie's situation. Childhood freedom, a concept espoused so strongly by members of the child study movement, was not only illusory, but a concept deployed by the adult world to manipulate and control the child whilst salving their own consciences. Maisie's only freedom lies in her impenetrability: contrary to Stanley Hall, James suggests we can never 'know' the content of a child's mind.

## *Jude the Obscure* and Child Suicide

The final version of unnatural childhood to be considered is undoubtedly the grimmest. In *Jude the Obscure* (1895), Hardy takes his starting point not from the presumptions of the child psychologists of the era, who had celebrated the fresh unsullied imagination of the child, but rather from its far gloomier counterpart in psychiatry, represented by Henry Maudsley. Just as Romantic idealized versions of childhood innocence had found their counterpart in evangelical projections of the child as a corrupt product of original sin, so, a century later, the psychologists' celebrations of the imaginative freshness of the child's 'savage' mind were matched by psychiatry's more pessimistic version of such evolutionary inheritance, where the child comes into the world burdened by the sins of its forebears in the shape of inherited nervous disorders, or other degenerative traits, and even unwelcome memories from past lives. The novel draws on the over-pressure debates of the 1880s and associated concerns with child suicide, but places them in a new light. The question of what a child can truly 'know' takes on a more unsettling evolutionary dimension.

Even for readers accustomed to some of the more graphic excesses of recent literature, the scene in *Jude the Obscure* where the bodies of Little Father Time and his siblings are discovered still retains its power to shock and disturb. The scene works as a direct assault on the reader, a deliberate attack on our novel-reading sensibilities, where children customarily represent hope for the future, a promise of continuity and development. As a culture, whether late nineteenth-century or early twenty-first, we have too much invested in our notions of childhood innocence—a state removed from the stresses and sufferings of adulthood—to accept without trauma the idea of child suicide. In this case we are looking not merely at suicide, but

murder as well, and not a form of murder that can be ascribed simply to animal brutishness. One of the most disturbing things about Father Time's action in *Jude the Obscure* is that he was trying to be helpful: if the children were removed, then Sue and Jude could once more lodge together. The idea of childhood innocence and virtue is retained at the very time of its gruesome undermining.

Critics of the novel, from the nineteenth century onwards, have been uncertain as to how to respond to Father Time's act.<sup>1</sup> The *Pall Mall Gazette* of 1895 opted for comedy, noting satirically that 'in due course an unblessed family appears; and soon early and later infants are attracting momentary attention by hanging each other with box-cord on little pegs all round the room'.<sup>2</sup> The glorious nonchalance of 'early and later infants', suggesting an unspecified number, linked to the material precision of 'box-cord' and the damning 'momentary attention', quickly recasts the scene as a version of comic grotesque. Margaret Oliphant, in her diatribe 'The Anti-Marriage League' in *Blackwood's*, takes one step further, suggesting that the deaths bring 'this nauseous tragedy suddenly and at a stroke into the regions of pure farce'. She asks facetiously whether Hardy would recommend this plan for 'general adoption. . . but then there is no natural provision in families of such a wise child to get its progenitors out of trouble'.<sup>3</sup> Evolutionary discourse is turned against itself as Hardy's pessimism is wilfully reinterpreted as a form of natural theology. The *Illustrated London News* adopts a similar line, noting that the comments of the doctor turn the whole scene into 'ghastly farce': 'We all know perfectly well that baby Schopenhauers are not coming into the world in shoals.'<sup>4</sup> Stalwart British common sense and ridicule are to keep at bay the threatened invasion of continental pessimism. Twentieth-century critics have echoed these forms of verdict: Father Time's suicide note, A. Alvarez suggests, 'is dangerously close to being laughable'.<sup>5</sup> In many ways these critical judgements are well placed: the scene does create readerly embarrassment, and one of the best mechanisms of defence is undoubtedly laughter. The scene is not merely a lapse of taste or artistic power on Hardy's part, however, but integral to his vision of the novel. *Jude the Obscure* engages with late-century discussions of the possibility of child suicide which, in their evolutionary form, gave new meaning to the sense of an 'old-fashioned' child.

From the very opening of the novel, child suicide is raised as a possibility. As Jude returns home, having been beaten for feeding, rather than scaring, the crows, he is weeping, not, we are told, 'from the perception of the flaw

in the terrestrial scheme, by which what was good for God's birds was bad for God's gardener; but with the awful sense that he had disgraced himself before he had been a year in the parish'.<sup>6</sup> Hardy's narrator intervenes to superimpose on Jude's childish sorrow an adult's pessimistic vision of a Darwinian struggle for existence which overturns the comforting religious order of natural theology. The teleology implied here is of a far more brutal kind: an inevitable progress to self-extinction. It is almost as if Hardy is harrying this child, or 'puppet',<sup>7</sup> to his 'destined issue'.<sup>8</sup>

Jude's progress across the field is thwarted by his reluctance to tread on the earthworms which cover the ground. He is a boy, we are told, 'who could not himself bear to hurt anything': 'He could scarcely bear to see trees cut down or lopped, from a fancy that it hurt them; and late pruning, when the sap was up, and the tree bled profusely, had been a positive grief to him in his infancy' (p. 11). Such extremes of sensitivity, applied not merely to the lower reaches of the animal kingdom but to the vegetable world as well, might appear excessive to us now, but would be recognized by late nineteenth-century readers as an explicit marker of the increasingly morbid state of mind developing in the nation's youth. Thus an article 'On Cruelty to Animals' in the *Fortnightly Review* (1876) noted that

It is possible to develop such a delicacy of sentiment, that the vegetable world shall also be included, and until it may become impossible not only to kill a rabbit, but to order the felling of a tree, or the stubbing of a useless hedge. Yet this is surely morbid, and is far less to be desired than the more robust type of character, which pursues happiness with energy and shuts its eyes to unavoidable pain.<sup>9</sup>

Jude, who later is to have such trouble coping with the sufferings of pigs and rabbits, is clearly one of these 'morbid' beings whose sensitivities towards the natural world mark them out for a life of 'unavoidable pain'. Although he manages to pick 'his way on tiptoe among the earthworms, without killing a single one', it is evident that such a delicate balancing act cannot be maintained. The narrator intervenes once more to acknowledge, and question, the diagnosis of morbidity, and to offer his own gloom-laden prognosis: 'This weakness of character, as it may be called, suggested that he was the sort of man who was born to ache a great deal before the fall of the curtain upon his unnecessary life should signify that all was well with him again' (p. 11). As before, the perception here is not that of the child Jude, but of an adult intelligence. Various critics have attributed the overwhelming pessimism of this text to the influence of Schopenhauer on Hardy's

writing,<sup>10</sup> and one can certainly trace correlations between notes taken by Hardy from Schopenhauer's *Studies in Pessimism* and the novel: 'Children', Hardy notes, 'condemned not to death but to life'. But when Hardy draws his image of the stage curtain from Schopenhauer, he does so with a significant difference. According to Schopenhauer, 'In early youth, as we contemplate our coming life, we are like children in a theatre before the curtain is raised, sitting there in high spirits and eagerly waiting for the play to begin.'<sup>11</sup> In a sense, Hardy achieves the near impossible of outdoing Schopenhauer in degrees of pessimism. His child is not endowed with high spirits, eagerly waiting for the curtain to go up, but is rather burdened from youth with the sense of suffering and hopelessness that Schopenhauer accorded only to adults.

Why should Hardy choose to burden his child in this way? The answer, in part (and for Hardy answers are always only in part) seems to lie with his subscription to theories of hereditary transmission of character traits, which add a further, materialist, layer to the pessimism of Schopenhauer. In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* Hardy always left it open to question whether heredity itself, or merely the *idea* of heredity, functioned as a determining cause. In *Jude* the question of hereditary influence seems clearer: the legendary Fawley inheritance is not simply an old wives' tale, but a physiologically determining force. We should, for once, trust Hardy when he states in a letter of 1896 that his novel is concerned not with marriage in general, but 'merely with the doom of hereditary temperament & unsuitable mating in marriage'.<sup>12</sup> There is, of course, a level of disingenuousness in his insistent surprise that readers saw the book as an attack on marriage, but in each of his responses he foregrounds heredity. Thus he thanks Edmund Gosse for his discriminating review, noting once again that the novel is not a manifesto on the marriage question since it is concerned 'first with the labours of a poor student to get a University degree, & secondly with the tragic issues of two bad marriages, owing in the main to a doom or curse of hereditary temperament peculiar to the family of the parties'.<sup>13</sup> Gosse's review stresses this latter aspect. Hardy, he notes, 'has undertaken to trace the lamentable results of unions in a family exhausted by intermarriage and poverty'. Hardy writes, in part, as a physician, a 'neuropathist', depicting Jude as 'a neurotic subject in whom hereditary degeneracy takes an idealist turn', and Father Time as a boy 'whose habitual melancholy, combined with his hereditary antecedents, has prepared us for an outbreak of suicide, if not of murder'.<sup>14</sup>

Gosse readily identifies these figures, including the child suicide, because they were staples in the discussions of the ailments of modern life and the workings of heredity in periodicals, newspapers, and books at this time. A quick glance at Hardy's notebooks of the preceding period is sufficient to show an abiding interest in heredity, and more explicitly in the ways in which past experiences of our forebears are imprinted upon us. Thus he takes notes on Galton's theories of hereditary defects, discussions in the *Contemporary Review* of the 'fatality of heredity', and Hering's theory that 'Though individuals die their offspring carry on the memory of all the impressions their ancestors acquired or received'.<sup>15</sup> Most extensively, there are notes from Henry Maudsley's *Natural Causes and Supernatural Seemings* (1886), where Hardy makes entries on 'a distinct neurotic strain' in families, and a 'narrow intensity of temperament', and the following passage on memory:

The individual brain is virtually the consolidate embodiment of a long series of memories; where every body, in the main lines of his thoughts, feelings and conduct, really recalls the experiences of his forefathers. Consciousness tells him indeed that he is a self-sufficing individual with infinite potentialities of free will; it tells him also that the sun goes round the earth.<sup>16</sup>

Maudsley here outlines the central conflict at the heart of *Jude*: the aspiration to be free, to determine one's own course, set against the sense that one is entrapped and imprisoned by the past. Just as Christminster is a form of mausoleum, so Jude himself is merely living out the 'thoughts and feelings and conduct' of his family, which are to receive final expression in Father Time's drastic act. What might seem the highly tenuous theory that the feelings and conduct of our ancestors can be inscribed in such detail on our minds, is given the double weight of Maudsley's own medical authority and that of Copernicus. Evolutionary psychology has created a new Copernican revolution, forcing individuals to re-evaluate their cherished senses of centrality and uniqueness.

Under the theory outlined by Maudsley, Hering, and Spencer, the individual is like a landscape, written over by the past. Although the sites of the historical past in Marygreen are being obliterated in the opening scene of the novel, the legacy of the past is still firmly inscribed in Jude, a child who was 'an ancient man in some phases of thought' (p. 22).<sup>17</sup> Such inscription is even more marked in Father Time, who is less a child than a walking symbol:



He was Age masquerading as Juvenility, and doing it so badly that his real self showed through the crevices. A ground swell from ancient years of night seemed now and then to lift the child in this his morning-life, when his face took a back view over some great Atlantic of time, and appeared not to care about what it saw. (p. 290)

Hardy, in this novel, takes the implications of contemporary psychology and pushes them further than any current theorist. Logically, if the child is the bearer of the thoughts and feelings of his parents and ancestors, he ceases to be a child according to previous categories of perception: a being who is defined by innocence and lack of experience. As the figure of Father Time suggests, it is impossible to be a child anymore: Age has to masquerade as Juvenility.

All these developments in psychological theory help to make the unthinkable—that a child might wish to commit suicide—not only thinkable but inevitable. The problem of child suicide figured strongly in newspaper and periodical discussion of the 1880s and 1890s. The *Review of Reviews* in 1890 gives an account of a paper by S. A. K. Strahan which paid particular attention to the ‘growth of the class of child suicides’, a development that was then linked to the increase of nervous disease and hereditary predisposition.<sup>18</sup> Discussion in England of child suicide as a phenomenon dates back to the 1850s, when statistics were first published of child suicides in France. The topic featured quite strongly in the *Journal of Psychological Medicine and Mental Pathology* at this time, amidst more general discussions of child insanity. Forbes Winslow, the editor, had a keen interest in the topic, having himself published a book on suicide a decade earlier.<sup>19</sup> Suicide held a particular fascination for positivist thinkers in the nineteenth century since an act whose essence, as Hardy might say, appeared to be its voluntariness could be fairly predicted and plotted according to recognized statistical curves. This insight lay behind the four major works on suicide in the last two decades of the century by Morselli (1882), Wynn Westcott (1885), Strahan (1893), and Durkheim, in his famous sociological study of 1897.<sup>20</sup>

The first European discussions of child suicide, drawing on French material, tended to stress parental ill-treatment as the dominating cause, but the first specifically English engagement with the topic, by James Crichton Browne in his 1860 essay ‘Psychical Diseases of Early Life’, emphasized instead the role of heredity. To support his case that ‘psychical disease’ could exist ‘in utero, in infancy, and childhood’ he draws together numerous incidences of ‘homicidal monomania’ in children, including the strangling of

siblings, as well as examples of child melancholia. He notes: 'This disease appears incompatible with early life, but it is only so in appearance, for the buoyancy and gladness of childhood may give place to despondency and despair, and faith and confidence be superseded by doubt and misery.'<sup>21</sup> He proceeds to give accounts of child suicide in France, Germany, and England, in children ranging from 5 to 15, and endorses French findings that the phenomenon had risen sevenfold in the last thirty years.

Crichton Browne, who subsequently became a friend of Hardy, was to lead the field in child psychiatry for the next forty years and, as we have seen, spearheaded the medical side of the over-pressure debates. It is probably no coincidence that suicide of children under 15 was first added to the English tables the year after his 1860 article. The resulting statistics make alarming reading. From 1861 to 1888 there were 261 child suicides recorded, with a marked increase in the 1880s.<sup>22</sup> By the 1880s the idea that child suicide was now common, and on the increase, became a standard ingredient in articles on the pressures of modern life. An article in *Blackwood's* (1880) notes that the number of suicides under 16 is

swelling rapidly, and is already large enough to indicate that the disposition to suicide may lay hold of us almost in babyhood. Nearly two thousand boys and girls are now yielding to it every year in Europe. Thus far they do not seem to begin before they are nine; that is the moment, apparently, at which the pains of life become unbearable to them, as happened to the little boy who drowned himself for grief at the loss of his canary.<sup>23</sup>

It is worth noting that Jude is 11 when we first meet him, and he wishes he were dead. Father Time, in line with the timing suggested above, is 9 when he kills himself.

The *Blackwood's* article draws on continental writers to explain the phenomenon of child suicide, citing an increasing weariness of life, but also the advance of schooling. The spread of the alphabet, it was claimed, also brought with it the spread of voluntary death: 'never, in our senses, should we have supposed that village-schooling is, indirectly, the most fertile of all the actual origins of suicide. And yet it seems to be so.' In place of the usual notion that education would lead to a cure of the moral evils which bedevilled society, schooling is now singled out as the primary cause of suicide. The continental authors seem to be suggesting that 'if we go on as we have begun, we shall soon see suicide officially recognised by Governments as an inevitable result of study (like headaches and spectacles),

and placed naturally, all over Europe, under the supervision of the inspectors of schools'.<sup>24</sup> The comically macabre vision of European bureaucracy run mad is underpinned by the disturbing implication that education for the lower classes would not bring the cultural and social rewards anticipated by Tory and radical reformers alike, but rather a deepened awareness of the unbearable nature of their lot in life.<sup>25</sup> The link between Jude's educational desires and the spiralling negativity of himself and Father Time is here illuminated, explaining also, perhaps, why Hardy rewrote the early chapters of *Jude*, introducing the crucial figure of the schoolmaster.<sup>26</sup> Jude's early discontent has been triggered by his attendance at the village school.

*Blackwood's* article also draws attention to the hereditary element in suicide, citing two separate continental cases 'in each of which seven brothers have hanged themselves one after the other'.<sup>27</sup> Although the mythic dimensions to these accounts might cause one to doubt their accuracy, or at least to see an element of imitation in play, the author firmly insists that these cases show beyond a shadow of a doubt the 'occasional transmission of the suicidal tendency from parents to children'.<sup>28</sup>

These twin ideas—the advance of schooling, and hereditary transmission—dominated discussion in the coming decades. Our current concerns with school pressures on the young pale into insignificance when compared to the late nineteenth century when, as we have seen, endless treatises were produced on the dire consequences of 'brain forcing' and the suicide of children and undergraduates due to exam pressure.<sup>29</sup> In his report to the government in 1884 Crichton Browne had stressed that the huge increases in diseases of the brain and nervous system, and of suicides of those under 16 in England and Europe, were tied to the spread of education.<sup>30</sup> There were gender issues lying behind these pronouncements, but also ones of class. Education, Wynn Westcott argued in his treatise on suicide, 'produces precocious development of the reflective faculties, of vanity, and of the desires'.<sup>31</sup> 'Precocious' development, in this regard, is focused more strongly on newly emerging working-class education, which encouraged 'reflection' and aspirational desires where none had been deemed to exist before. Wynn Westcott also draws attention to the workings of hereditary predisposition, recording cases of whole families killing themselves. He allows, however, for a reflective element at work:

The effect of mental agitation in a person knowing that he is the descendant of insane persons or of suicides, is worthy of consideration; to a well-educated man,

what a 'skeleton in the closet' to live with, must be the constant recollection of the risk to which hereditary transmission exposes him. Such a spectre may well refuse to be laid, and must be the fertile cause in the production of another generation of suicides.<sup>32</sup>

Hereditary disposition and imaginative response are here inextricably tied, in ways paralleled in *Jude*. Although Jude has been warned since childhood, in doom-laden terms, about his unhealthy family stock, he does not actually attempt to kill himself until shortly after he discovers, following a row with Arabella, that his mother drowned herself.

One of the most influential interventions on the question of child suicide, and one Hardy probably read, was Henry Maudsley's essay in the *Fortnightly Review*, 1886 on 'Heredity in Health and Disease'. Here Maudsley argues that, as with animal breeding, the fixed qualities of family stock 'are deeper and more stable than those of the individual'. All of us hold, in latency, ancestral qualities that will be awakened to activity in the right conditions. Maudsley suggests, therefore, that the true way to self-knowledge for a man is not through introspection, but by the study of his relations, 'for he may observe in one or another of them the full development of what lies dormant in him, hidden and indiscernible—the actual outcome of the deep-lying potentialities of the family stock'.<sup>33</sup> The Romantic model of selfhood, which privileged ideas of a unique interiority, is supplanted by one which not only denies uniqueness but situates the secrets of selfhood outside the domain of individual identity. These 'deep-lying potentialities' are of course intensified, according to Maudsley and his peers, by interbreeding and the marriage of cousins. In line with the eugenic debates of the time, Strahan published, at the same time as his book on suicide, an article in the *Westminster Review* on the dangers of consanguineous marriages.<sup>34</sup>

In *Jude* it is made quite clear that not only should the Fawleys never marry, but the marriage of two from the same stock must necessarily result in unmitigated disaster. When Jude first sees Sue he thinks 'she was so pretty . . . he could not believe it possible that she should belong to him'. But then she speaks, 'and he recognized in the accents certain qualities of his own voice; softened and sweetened, but his own' (p. 89). It is significant that it is not so much their features which link them as their issue—their voice—that which they bring forth. After this first glimpse Jude rehearses the reasons why he should not think romantically of Sue:

The first reason was that he was married, and it would be wrong. The second was that they were cousins. It was not well for cousins to fall in love even when the circumstances seemed to favour the passion. The third: even were he free, in a family like his own where marriage usually meant a tragic sadness, marriage with a blood-relation would duplicate the adverse conditions, and a tragic sadness might be intensified to a tragic horror. (p. 91)

The ethical dimensions of the first reason seem far outweighed by the combined force of the second two. The dread of cousin marriage, which was first taking hold when *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* was published, has become by the 1890s a central tenet of hereditarian thought. Although the act of Father Time strikes the reader with horror and surprise, in another sense we have been thoroughly prepared. Jude's reflections are later revealed to be not merely paranoid responses to local gossip, but fully justified and scientifically grounded.

Hardy's insistence on the importance of heredity, offered in his letters and in response to reviews, is replicated in the text of the novel, where he returns again and again to the question of Jude and Sue's biological unfitness for marriage, which is rendered even more compelling by their consanguinity. They later stand, 'possessed by the same thought, ugly enough as an assumption: that a union between them, had such been possible, would have meant a terrible intensification of unfitness—two bitters in a dish' (p. 175). Although they attempt to cast such ideas aside, it would seem that Jude and Sue are in the grip of a Maudsleyan plot.<sup>35</sup>

One of the primary forms of evidence adduced for hereditary temperament in late nineteenth-century medical works was the inheritance of a greater propensity to commit suicide. As Maudsley noted in his article, 'Of the direct inheritance of morbid qualities of like kind, suicide yields the most decided examples. It is, indeed, striking and startling to observe how strong the suicidal bent is apt to be in those who have inherited it, and how seemingly trivial a cause will stir it into action.' His main example of such hereditary transmission is child suicide:

Public feeling is much shocked, as if something very unnatural had happened, when a child of eight or nine years of age commits suicide, and is prone to rush to the hasty conclusion that so fearful an act would never have been done by so young a child unless it had been subjected to very cruel treatment. The real truth commonly is that the act is done for a cause that seems utterly inadequate; perhaps because his master inflicted a slight punishment, or because his father scolded him, or because his mother refused to let him go to a school-treat. But if the child's

family history be inquired into, it will usually be found that a line of suicide, or of melancholic depression with suicidal tendency, runs through it. So it comes to pass that a slight cause of vexation is sufficient to strike and make vibrate the fundamental life-sick note of its nature.<sup>36</sup>

Cultural understandings of the unnatural are overturned, as child suicide, on the slightest causes, becomes a predictable part of nature's patterns. We are in the territory of the young Jude, who, on discovering that there was not a secret key to Latin, sinks into despondency 'and continued to wish himself out of the world' (p. 27). Father Time, of course, makes literal the idea of the 'fundamental life-sick note of his nature' in his terrible last message: 'Done because we are too menny', with its seemingly helpless denial of personal agency, and its horrible pun on the condition of men expressed in the childish misspelling of 'many'.

Maudsley's pronouncements form part of the growing body of work which was to feed into the eugenics debates of the 1890s.<sup>37</sup> In his depiction of child suicide Hardy was narrowly anticipated by Emma Brooke's *A Superfluous Woman* (1894), although the forms of representation differ widely. Brooke's text is a 'New Woman' novel, whose plot bears strong similarities to the later *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. The heroine, Jessamine Halliday, is an overbred society girl who is saved from dying of ennui by a sensible doctor. She flees from London society to Scotland, where she falls in love with a muscular peasant, Colin. At the mention of marriage she flees once more, returning to London to sacrifice herself on the altar of family duty by marrying the debauched, degenerate scion of the ancient Heriot family. She bears two children who are kept hidden away, a family secret, for the girl is a malicious 'idiot' and the boy a 'poor malformed thing'. The family stock, we are informed, had sunk into 'insanity, disease, and shocking malformation' and our good, trustworthy doctor accuses the heroine of crime in becoming 'a mother by that effete and dissipated race'.<sup>38</sup> The Heriot family had only avoided extinction so far by the regular purchase of handsome women from outside, but the last members are about to be wiped out. Jessamine, who is expecting again, commits what is seen, extraordinarily, as a heroic act by willing that her child be born dead. She succeeds, and the other children conveniently destroy themselves: 'In one moment of fierce horror, the brood concealed therein [the nursery] had destroyed itself, the hand of the idiot girl having been lifted suddenly and dexterously against her helpless brother.'<sup>39</sup> The description is disconcertingly brief. There is no concern for the children themselves, and no

explanation as to how the girl died. Suicide is a possible answer, but the case seems almost closer to a degenerative version of Dickens's spontaneous combustion. For Brooke, it is sufficient for her readers to know that the heirs have erased themselves. As the doctor observes, 'The important thing was not that Heriot [the father] should reform, but that he and his race should pass into annihilation'.<sup>40</sup>

The novel, which enjoyed great popularity and was surprisingly well reviewed, gives some sense of the cultural climate in which Hardy was writing *Jude*.<sup>41</sup> As Strahan noted in his 1891 article, 'every year thousands of children are born with pedigrees which would condemn puppies to the horsepond'.<sup>42</sup> He urges, in opposition to Maudsley's stance, that there should be legal controls on who was allowed to propagate. Maudsley, for all his pessimism, took a far more enlightened line, advocating a form of attention to breeding that would allow morbid stock to be strengthened once more. The 'tincture of originality' which could set a man ahead of the world was precisely the same which could lead to madness.<sup>43</sup> We see this duality clearly in *Jude*, who is depicted both as a man fifty years ahead of his time and as a victim of his morbid inheritance. Sue, likewise, is a perfect exemplum of the 'neurotic, thin, hysterical young women' identified by such medical commentators as T. S. Clouston and Maudsley who should be advised not to marry.<sup>44</sup> Debates on female education, as we have seen, also formed part of this preoccupation with unhealthy breeding. Girls who directed their energies towards their brain cells rather than their reproductive systems would have difficulty reproducing, it was maintained, or would give birth to 'puny creatures' who 'either die in youth or grow up to be feeble-minded folks'.<sup>45</sup> Sue, with her fierce intellectual energy, and initial fear of sexual contact, would clearly run the risk, according to these theories, of producing defective children.

It is always difficult to trace the exact circumstances of a novel's composition or the particular social or cultural influences which might have impacted on an author, and the situation is particularly difficult for *Jude*, where the gestation is so long. Hardy made notes in 1887, a plan in 1890, an outline in 1892–3, published a serial, bowdlerized version in 1894, and the revised book form in 1895. During this time he undoubtedly had contacts with some of the leading psychiatrists of the day, although our records here are very partial. We know he visited an asylum with Clifford Allbutt in May 1891, and joined in discussion with Crichton Browne and Clifford Allbutt at the Royal Society in 1893.<sup>46</sup> In 1892 Crichton Browne invited Hardy to

lecture at the Royal Institution, and sent a letter praising *Tess*, which 'examines the psychological tissues with a powerful lens free from chromatic aberration'.<sup>47</sup> On the more specific question of child suicide, there were various accounts in *The Times* at this time. In May 1891, for example, there were two, including one in relatively nearby Bodmin.<sup>48</sup> There are many cases of fathers or mothers killing their children, and then killing themselves, but none I have yet discovered at this period where a child murders all his siblings. There are, however, both in these newspaper reports and in the wider literature, numerous cases of boys found hanging on nails in their bedroom, and various heart-rending suicide notes.<sup>49</sup>

In 1891 Hardy wrote a letter of sympathy to fellow novelist Rider Haggard, who had lost his 10-year-old son a couple of months before: 'Please give my kind regards to Mrs Haggard, and tell her how deeply our sympathy was with you both in your bereavement. Though, to be candid, I think the death of a child is never really to be regretted, when one reflects on what he has escaped.'<sup>50</sup> The insensitivity is stunning. Did Hardy really believe that a dose of his own pessimism would offer consolation for the Haggards? Had he become so invested in his own negativity that he failed to realize that others might see children as something other than mere unhappy symbols of the increasing miseries of modern life? The letter provides an insight into his depiction of the suicide scene in *Jude*, for it is arguable that he could only have written it by suppressing his sense of the humanity of Father Time and Jude and Sue's children. The latter remain nameless and almost sexless: Hardy added a further child for the book version, but it is only when we see the corpses that we discover that the baby is a boy. We never learn Father Time's original name; he comes with the nickname already imposed upon him, and Jude and Sue continue to employ it. They do try calling him Jude, but their most frequent appellation, also employed by the narrator, is the disturbingly anonymous 'the boy'. When Sue once calls him Juey, it strikes an odd note.

In his notebook Hardy had taken notes from an 1891 article on 'The Pessimism of Europe', which links the new 'drooping spirit' to the inherited memories carried in our subconscious. Science 'hints at the many voiceless beings that live out in our body their joy & pain, & scarce give sign, dwellers in the sub-centres, with whom, it may be, often lies the initiative when the conscious centre thinks itself free'.<sup>51</sup> Father Time is similarly a compounded individual, burdened by history, who lives out in his body the pain—but certainly not the joy—of those who have gone before. In the numerous



articles on pessimism at this time, Schopenhauer was repeatedly blamed for the rise of suicides in Europe,<sup>52</sup> although Schopenhauer himself explicitly attacked suicide since it thwarted the achievement of moral freedom, which is only to be obtained by a denial of the will to live.<sup>53</sup> Hardy took extensive notes on Schopenhauer's theories of education, which were designed to mitigate childhood suffering, and then deliberately inverted them in his representation of Father Time. 'No child under fifteen', Schopenhauer declares, 'should receive instruction in subjects which may possibly be the vehicle of serious error, such as philosophy, religion, or any other branch of knowledge where it is necessary to take large views.' In order to avoid any large generalizations which will necessarily lead them into wrong notions, they should focus on 'getting a thorough knowledge of individual and particular things'.<sup>54</sup> Father Time violates this norm. 'Children', Hardy notes, 'begin with detail and learn up to the general; they begin with the contiguous, and gradually comprehend the universal. The boy seemed to have begun with the generals of life, and never to have concerned himself with the particulars' (pp. 291–2). By inheritance, and by temperament, the child is hence shut out from the only avenue for salvation offered by Schopenhauer. His tragic death is represented as a tragedy of inheritance—a 'morbid temperament' thrown into a 'fit of aggravated despondency' (p. 355)—but also one of faulty education. Sue is unsure how to respond to this 'too reflective child' (p. 352) and makes a mistake in treating him as an 'aged friend', telling him of their destitution and another child on its way.

Hardy's representation of the death scene could not be more different from Brooke's. We are given full circumstantial details: Sue arises early and goes to find Jude without checking on the children. They return and Jude is employed in the mundane (but in retrospect horribly symbolic) task of boiling eggs when he is startled by Sue's scream. The account moves into an unsparing precision of detail—the door moving slowly on its hinges, Jude's bewilderment in seeing no children, until his gaze rests on the bodies hung on coathooks and a nail, and the overturned chair. The scene is portrayed with almost a disturbing lack of sentiment: Jude 'cut the cords with his pocket-knife and flung the children on the bed'. No tenderness or emotional reflection is allowed to subvert the sheer horror of the scene: Jude's violent reaction is of a piece with the overall assault on our senses. As readers we are to be allowed no respite, no easy retreat into cathartic sympathy. We quickly learn the bodies are scarcely cold: Hardy refuses to spare us.

A philosophical distance is quickly imposed, however, with Jude's account of the verdict of the doctor, who claims 'It was in his nature to do it'. Father Time is part of a new generation of boys who 'see all of [life's] terrors before they have staying power to resist them. He says it is the beginning of the coming universal wish not to live' (p. 355). The first two statements here are straight from Maudsley and contemporary discussions of suicide. Thus Maudsley had argued that Goethe was right in *The Sorrows of Werther* to make Werther commit suicide: 'suicide was the natural and inevitable termination of the morbid sorrows of such a nature'.<sup>55</sup> Suicide, Maudsley insists, is not an aberration but a natural act. Other theorists stressed that children had highly sensitive mental organizations, and the passions of adults, without the ability to weigh consequences correctly.<sup>56</sup> In this emerging model of childhood, which replaces previous Lockean conceptions, children are on a par with adults in their abilities to experience passion, but lack adult rational capacities. Hardy moves one stage further, however, to suggest that droves of children in the future will take the rational decision not to live.

In terms of the structure of the plot it seems in some sense strange that it is Jude and Arabella's child who kills the others since Arabella is in some respects the very picture of a Darwinian survivor. She is, however, a perfect match for Father Time: where he is both age and youth, history and prophecy, she is a combination of base animality and advanced artificiality. We are never allowed to forget her artificial dimple making and false hair, which undermine any attempts to identify her solely with the domain of the natural. With regard to Father Time, Hardy is also operating not with a straightforward Darwinian model of inheritance, but one in which the acts and thoughts of the parents, before and after birth, leave direct imprints on their offspring. Father Time thus expresses the results of both marriages: 'On that little shape had converged all the inauspiciousness and shadow which had darkened the first union of Jude, and all the accidents, mistakes, fears, errors of the last. He was their nodal point, their focus, their expression in a single term' (p. 356). The child is stripped of individual identity to become, in Hardy's technical term (employed in both nineteenth-century physics and biology), the 'nodal point' of the adults' lives.

*Jude the Obscure* was followed a year later by another novel which featured child suicide, Marie Corelli's *The Mighty Atom*, although the treatment, in its sentimentality, could not be more different from Hardy's. An adorable child,

who has been subjected both to inhuman educational cramming and an atheistical upbringing by his father which had reduced the notion of God to that of a 'Mighty Atom', hangs himself (with the baby sash which is his only relic of his mother) in an attempt to find 'Gentle Jesus': he 'calmly confronted the vast Infinite, and went forth on his voyage of discovery to find the God denied him by the cruelty and arrogance of man!'.<sup>57</sup> The book is a confused response to the major issues of the day, including as its targets overpressure and cramming, atheism and materialism, the new woman, and even, glancingly, vivisection.<sup>58</sup> Eleven-year-old Lionel, who is made to deliver the immortal line 'I am not clever, I am only crammed', is another reworking of Paul Dombey and Father Time. He has an 'old-fashioned manner' and 'there was an almost appalling expression of premature wisdom on his pale wistful features'.<sup>59</sup> Unlike Hardy, Corelli eschews any form of explanation from heredity; her children are innocents, and the blame lies entirely with the adults whose mistaken values make life unbearable for the child. Unsure as whether to blame atheism or cramming for the death, the novel conflates the two in an unholy alliance. The book is dedicated "To those Self-Styled Progressivists" who by precept and example assist the infamous cause of Education without Religion' and 'are guilty of a Worse Crime than Murder'. Although the doctor believes the child has been 'murdered by over-cramming', Lionel's father refuses to feel remorse, or to accept that it was possible to overcram a brain, and insists instead on the usual verdict of 'suicide during temporary insanity'.<sup>60</sup> Corelli's text draws on many of the same concerns as Hardy, but is a violent, almost hysterical rejection of his stance, and his refusal to invoke religion as a panacea for perceived social ills.

In creating his matter-of-fact death scene Hardy brought together two genres: philosophical accounts of European pessimism and the very detailed descriptions of child suicides in newspapers and psychiatric articles, which often gave all the physical circumstances of death, as well as the childish notes left, or the responses of siblings to the corpses. Hardy draws on this vein of morbid curiosity, but then produces a further twist: the text suggests that perhaps Father Time, in his successful achievement of death, is the lucky one. Both Jude and Sue are failed suicides. Sue brings forth another corpse, a stillborn child, and longs for death, but is not permitted such an easy resolution. Jude makes his journey to Sue in the rain, determined to die, but is forced to recover and linger on until the summer for a final symbolic humiliation. At least their ancestor who tried to steal back the dead body of his child was accorded the dignity of death on the gibbet. To

paraphrase Edmund Gosse, there are times when one wants to shake one's fist at Hardy, the pessimism seems so unrelenting.<sup>61</sup>

I conclude with a curious note in the afterlife of *Jude*. Whilst staying with the Pitt Rivers family in November 1895, Hardy had met their youngest daughter, Agnes Grove, and embarked on another semi-romantic/literary relationship.<sup>62</sup> He wrote to her subsequently that her

remarks about Sue's talk with the child in 'Jude' suggested to me that an article might be written entitled 'What should children be told?'—working it out under the different headings of 'on human nature', 'on temptations', 'on money', 'on physiology', &c. It would probably attract attention.<sup>63</sup>

Not only did Hardy suggest this article, he also prompted her again to write it, massively reworked her drafts, and arranged for publication in the radical *Free Review*.<sup>64</sup> The first part of the article was violently anti-clerical in its views on education in terms that would have scandalized Corelli; the second addressed the issue of what children should be told about physiology and recommended the adoption of a degree of honesty when dealing with questions of sex:

That it is unwise wilfully to mislead enquiring children should be obvious to all thoughtful people. There is, however, a medium between falling back on the 'gooseberry bush' theory, and complete candour, when questioned as to the awe-inspiring, curiosity-exciting, genesis of infants. And one need fortunately have no fear of this middle course producing in an ordinary child such lamentable results as its readers will remember were produced by Sue's fatal conversation with the child in 'Jude the Obscure'.

Bravely, but perhaps unwisely, Agnes Grove offers an example of the kind of advice that should be given:

the answer given to a small enquirer by its mother, as to why she should be ill when a new baby came—that children were part of their mothers, and that they suffered pain, and had to lie still in much the same way as if a limb or some other portion of them had been taken away—quite satisfied the child, and involved no untruths.<sup>65</sup>

Personally, I prefer Sue's version. This late-Victorian version of 'helpful candour', with its representation of childbirth as a form of amputation, goes some way to illuminating the difficulties faced by the Victorians in their attempts to think through the relationship between childhood, sexuality, and adulthood. One could see this article, drafted through a woman, as Hardy's attempt to make amends for the 'lamentable results' or, to use a

thoroughly Victorian term, 'unspeakable' pessimism of his text. Far from offering a corrective, however, it raises further questions which the novel had only touched on: if a child possesses the passions of an adult, do these include sexual passions? And if a child is imprinted with the thoughts and feelings of its parents and ancestors, does it even need to be 'told' about sexuality? (Unbeknownst to Hardy, Freud was of course pursuing a similar set of questions at this time in Vienna.)

The question, 'What children should be told', addresses the whole issue of the dividing line between adult life and childhood, taking as its uncertain boundary the domain of sexuality. In *Jude* the tragedy, although long implanted, is finally evoked by the child trying to come to terms with the workings of sexual reproduction. At one level, Father Time's insistence that Sue must have become pregnant on purpose, 'For nobody would interfere with us like that, unless you agreed!' (p. 353), reveals childish misunderstanding. But at another level it is right, and chillingly encodes Hardy's own negative perceptions of sexual life: the very domain which should be the expression of our highest individual freedom is in fact yet another sphere where we are controlled by our biological inheritance.

In his 1885 study of *Suicide*, Wynn Westcott accused novelists of poisoning minds, particularly those of the partially educated, by making suicide an acceptable option.<sup>66</sup> In a long article in *The Guardian*, 4 July 1894, the Bishop of Salisbury took up the refrain: 'It is a great blot upon certain writers' fame that in their works suicide is suggested, discussed, dallied with as a natural means to escape a difficult situation.'<sup>67</sup> Hardy could scarcely be accused of making suicide attractive. He does, however, push to the limit contemporary theories of pessimism, outdoing Schopenhauer in endowing his child protagonists with pessimistic understanding beyond their years. He also takes up Maudsley's point that child suicide is not a violation of all natural laws, but on the contrary a natural phenomenon, which will recur with increasing frequency as degenerative inheritance takes hold. At the heart of these discussions lies the central question of what it means to be a child. If a child can commit that seemingly most adult of acts, self-murder, where do the boundaries between childhood and adult states lie? Hardy takes one step further than his contemporaries, combining discussions of child suicide with theories of inherited memories to show that, logically, a child who is burdened by the thoughts and feelings of his forebears must cease to be a child. The very category of childhood, as a state characterized by innocence and inexperience, must cease to exist.

## Conclusion

Wordsworth's famous line 'The child is father of the man' receives a stark reinterpretation in Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*. No longer does 'father' suggest the potentiality of a life to unfold. Father Time might, according to Chamberlain's vision of the child, be an embodiment of both the past and future history of his race, but if so, the 'prophecy' he offers is a decisively gloomy one, where the weight of the past can overwhelm the future.

At the end of the eighteenth century, Romantic conceptions of child innocence were matched by evangelical declarations that the child was a creature of original sin. Despite the intervening rise of sciences of childhood, the same dichotomy can be traced at the end of the nineteenth century. For the psychologists, largely speaking, the mental state of the child matched that of 'primitive peoples at the poetical and mythological stage'.<sup>1</sup> In Robert Louis Stevenson's suggestive words, the child 'is not our contemporary'. The child, as primitive, is the idealized focus for those projections of creativity, originality, and imagination which lay behind much of the children's literature of the period. Psychiatric models, by contrast, tended to emphasize the burden of somatic and psychological inheritance carried by children, in a new evolutionary rendering of the biblical notion that the sins of the fathers will be visited on the sons. The child, according to this model, is doubly burdened: the carrier of primitive, animalistic passions, but also the attenuated nerves of an overdeveloped civilization and unbidden memories of the past.

Even the realm of imagination, celebrated by psychologists such as Sully, becomes for the psychiatrist a signal of pathology. *Jude the Obscure* was published in the same year as Sully's *Studies of Childhood* and Crichton Browne's *On Dreamy Mental States*. The latter drew extensively on literary texts (including Hardy's *A Pair of Blue Eyes*) to argue that such states, which emanated from a sense of pre-existence, and emerged in childhood around

age 9 or 10, should not be regarded in Wordsworthian terms 'as intimations of immortality, but as revivals of hereditarily transmitted or acquired states in new combinations' which would lead, if unattended, to progressive degeneration of the mind in the following generations.<sup>2</sup> The seeds of disorder are clearly sown in the Fawley family, and are seen in the child Jude, who 'had held his outer being for some long tideless time' in the surroundings of his aunt's shop, but had inwardly lived within his gigantic dreams.<sup>3</sup> Dreamy mental states, Crichton Browne argued, involve 'an exaltation of subject consciousness, and a degradation of the power of attention', creating in the second generation problems with ideas of space, and in the third and fourth, the loss of a sense of personal identity.<sup>4</sup> Such a loss is made dramatically evident in the radically overdetermined death of Father Time.

Father Time belongs in a sequence of children, starting with Paul Dombey, who inhabit the domain of age during infancy. Maisie is another version of Age masquerading as Juvenility, although her age is acquired, not inherited. Like Father Time she becomes the 'nodal point' of her parents' lives, acquiring through her role as intermediary a level of knowledge she is forced, in her outward performance of childhood, to conceal. Both texts participate in the late-century fascination with the child mind, which was to become the touchstone for both cultural and scientific forms of understanding. The child, as Sully announced, is 'a monument of his race, and . . . a key to its history'.<sup>5</sup> In his *Introduction to Child Study* (1907), W. B. Drummond itemized some of the varying ways in which science focused its attention on the child: 'The philologist, for instance, turns to baby linguistics in the expectation of gaining a better understanding of the origin of human speech. The anthropologist, unable to discover a living specimen of primitive man, turns to the child as his nearest representative. The archaeologist finds valuable material in the child's attempts to draw.'<sup>6</sup> The rise of the historical sciences, allied to theories of recapitulation, gives the child an unprecedented position in the domain of knowledge, no longer an afterthought or irrelevance but the primary source of evidence and key to understanding in a range of disciplines. Such historicism was also applied to self-understanding, following, in Clifford Siskin's terms, 'the Romantic redefinition of the self as a mind that grows'.<sup>7</sup> Literary explorations of the thoughts, experiences, and emotions of the child, from Wordsworth's study of 'The Growth of a Poet's Mind' and the mid-century novels of child development through to the autobiographies and studies of the child in the 1890s, focused increasingly on childhood as the key to the adult mind, a perception which was to receive scientific instantiation in the psychoanalysis of Freud.

At the very point in time when childhood became of such intense interest to psychology, however, it seems, paradoxically, to disappear. All those detailed scientific notebooks on the first movements and utterances of the child had, as their primary concern, not the child itself but its role as an index of evolutionary development. The child becomes an iteration of parental or species history rather than an entity in its own right. Whether following the traces of parental influence or the unfolding of humanity's evolutionary history, psychologists were looking at childhood as a map to another, alternative domain. The boundaries of childhood itself also became unclear as evolutionary psychology abolished the category of childhood as previously understood. Innocence was replaced with experience, as the child came into the world bearing the marks and memories of its familial and racial history, offering itself up as a 'key' to lost worlds.

In 1900 the aptly named Ellen Key announced, in her influential book of that name, the arrival of *The Century of the Child*.<sup>8</sup> Her pronouncement builds upon earlier observations that the 1890s was the 'age of the child'.<sup>9</sup> Part of her argument rested on the far greater attention being paid to the child in the educational and social spheres. In England, such concern had borne fruit in the formation of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children in 1889 under the crusading Benjamin Waugh, and the passing of a whole series of acts in 1889, 1894, 1904 through to the Children's Act in 1908, all designed to protect the child from adult cruelty.<sup>10</sup> This study has focused primarily on attitudes to the middle-class child, since its working-class counterpart, with limited education, and at work from an early age, was not deemed to inhabit the same domain of childhood. Whilst middle-class children could be noble savages, their working-class equivalents were usually of the ignoble kind, or stunted adults with precocious sexuality.<sup>11</sup> The acts, together with the raising of the age of consent to 16 (1885) and of the school-leaving age to 11 (1893) and 12 (1899), helped to extend the empire of childhood, mirroring in social and legal terms the preoccupation with protecting the boundaries of childhood which spurred on the idealistic members of the child study movement. As Hugh Cunningham has noted, however, the 'rights' now attached to the child were not those of adult entitlement but of insulation, the right to be a child, to exist in a separate space from that of the adult world.<sup>12</sup>

In Key's book, the discourse of child rights is reworked in eugenicist terms. The first chapter is entitled 'The Right of the Child to Choose his Parents': her interpretation of 'choice' is even more alarming than that presented to Maisie. Whilst Father Time had to undergo the labour of



choice in deciding not to live, Key would protect other such damaged children from such labour. Doctors should be allowed to end the misery of any child 'who is incurably ill, physically and psychically': 'Only when death is inflicted through compassion, will the humanity of the future show itself.'<sup>13</sup> Mankind should learn to act in the spirit of natural selection: not only criminals should be hindered from perpetuating themselves, but also those 'with inherited physical or psychical disease'.<sup>14</sup> Only this way will the child have the 'choice' of parents it deserves.<sup>15</sup> The glorious vision of 'The Children's Century' is based on more disturbing premisses than *Jude the Obscure*. Amidst our current concerns with reproductive technologies, and the increasing possibilities of intervention they present, it is instructive to note that the 'rights' of the unborn child have been associated with extreme forms of eugenicist thought: not a right to life, but to death.

Key also includes amongst children's rights that of having a mother who does not work but remains at home to devote herself to her children: 'I am trying to convince women that vengeance is being exacted on the individual, on the race, when woman gradually destroys the deepest source of her physical and psychical being, the power of motherhood.'<sup>16</sup> The argument is that deployed earlier by Maudsley and other psychiatrists in their opposition to female education. Whilst Hardy had the deepest sympathy for his 'puppet' Sue, with her nerves and intellectual ambitions, his plot conforms to the evolutionary model of vengeance here articulated by Key. The emancipated new woman is not permitted to rear her children to adulthood.

Yet Key's work is more varied in tone and stance than these illustrations might suggest. Thus she joins in condemnations of physical punishment, empathizing with the position of the child: 'A grown man would become insane if joking Titans treated him for a single day as a child is treated for a year.'<sup>17</sup> She echoes George Eliot in *Mill on the Floss* in her observation that adults no longer remember the 'feelings and impressions of their own childhood' and so 'look on at the troubles of our children with a smiling disbelief in the reality of their pain'.<sup>18</sup> Her version of the nervous suffering of the child similarly echoes Martineau's description of the terrors and agonies of childhood which adults fail to comprehend:

The adult laughs or smiles in remembering the punishments and other things which caused him in his childhood anxious days or nights, which produced the silent torture of the child's heart, infinite despondency, burning indignation, lonely fears, outraged sense of justice, the terrible creations of his imagination, his absurd shame, his unsatisfied thirst for joy, freedom and tenderness.<sup>19</sup>

The terrified child of mid-century construction is linked, in that final phrase, to late-century reimaginings of the Romantic child as a vehicle of joy and imaginative freedom.

Key was influenced by the writings of Rousseau, and by the child study movement, which has offered for the first time, she notes, the possibility of understanding the psychology of the child.<sup>20</sup> Part of her opposition to kindergartens was that they reduced the possibilities of child study: 'the study of the psychology of the child, begun at its birth, continued in its play, its work, its rest, means a daily comparative study, and requires the undivided attention of one person' (p. 240). The demands placed on the parent in the name of child study sound impossibly gruelling—as if the requirements of the new science have turned the parent into a mere instrument of observational surveillance, doomed to watch even while the child sleeps. Key draws on ideas of the child as positioned at a primitive developmental stage in her criticisms of current educational practices: 'The educator . . . is apt to forget that the child in many cases has as few moral conceptions as the animal or the savage' (p. 138). Such views nonetheless bring enlightened advice: a child who cannot explain its actions should not be accused of lying, nor of thieving before he has a concept of property (p. 238).

The strongest sections of the work are on education, where Key, in her chapter on 'Soul Murder in the Schools', draws on the previous decades' criticisms of deadening school practices of rote learning and over-examination.<sup>21</sup> High schools achieve the impossible, she claims, 'the annihilation of existent matter', since they destroy all personality and initiative in their pupils. The terms of her argument echo Carter's influential 'The Artificial Production of Stupidity in Schools', reprinted in the 1890s. Her analysis reiterates the arguments of the over-pressure debates:

What are the results of the present-day school? Exhausted brain power, weak nerves, limited originality, paralysed initiative, dulled power of observing surrounding facts, idealism blunted under the feverish zeal of getting a position in the class—a wild chase in which parents and children regard the loss of a year as a great misfortune. (p. 275)

The system leaves students incapable of thinking for themselves and reflecting on what they have learnt. Employers find them incapable of taking up practical duties in areas where they have supposedly gained knowledge. Key looks forward to the schools of the future: 'In the course of a hundred years or so, experience of this sort will cause the downfall of the system' (p. 276).

From the perspective of the twenty-first century, Key's vision appears unduly optimistic. Although some of the terms of the debates have changed, the central concerns, that children are losing their childhood through the pressure of over-examination, and that their mental health is suffering in the process, are ones that are highly topical in the UK today. On 11 March 2008, *The Independent* newspaper ran the headline: 'Why are children so unhappy?' with the secondary title: 'Teachers demand inquiry into the epidemic of anxiety in the classroom'.<sup>22</sup> The phrase 'epidemic of anxiety' takes us straight back to Crichton Browne, who was accused by the government's spokesperson of introducing spurious medical claims in his report on over-pressure in schools. *The Independent* article draws on a range of recent official reports to bring together two current strands of concern: over-examination and child unhappiness and suicide. Nineteenth-century worries about 'payment by results' and teaching to examinations are replicated in contemporary concerns about league tables and a testing regime that starts in infancy, leading to claims that the British are the most examined children in the world.<sup>23</sup> A recent cluster of teenage suicides in a small town in Wales has exacerbated anxieties about the mental state of our young, and been drawn into the wider discussion of educational testing, although there is no evidence that the suicides were connected, or that educational pressure was involved.<sup>24</sup> There were also concerns, made much of in the media, that internet sites had played a role in the suicides, thus updating 1890s claims that fashionable novels had led to increases in suicides amongst the young.

Although the media always presents the latest concern about children as something new and unprecedented, the framework of understanding, as I have shown, is that of the nineteenth century. Some of the presuppositions have changed: it is no longer maintained, at least overtly, that higher education will damage women's ability to reproduce by channelling much needed energy away from their reproductive systems to their brains. Nonetheless, our current complex of beliefs that childhood is a period distinct from adulthood that needs to be protected, but is nonetheless prone to anxieties, nervous disorders, educational over-pressure, and even suicide, is one that arises in the nineteenth century. Ideas of child sexuality were also prevalent before Freud, whilst our modern notions of the teenager or adolescent can also be traced to this period. It is worth remembering that before the 1840s children were held to be exempt from the neuroses and insanities that plagued adulthood, whilst educational precocity was highly prized as allowing the child to ascend swiftly into manhood. Victorian

reworkings of Romantic ideals of childhood, as a time to be treasured and kept apart from adult life, were accompanied by new psychological models suggesting the child was liable to all the passions and disorders of adult life. Evolutionary psychology, putting forward the argument that the child brought a historical legacy from the past, and was closer, in its early years, to animal or primitive life than to its own parents, created a further complexity in the struggle to comprehend child difference.

These changes in conceptions of the child mind were not the product of one sphere but rather of intricate patterns of exchange between science, literature, and medicine, developed further through social practice and debate. Literature initially led the way: Dickens's portrait of Paul Dombey, forced out of life by the dual pressures of parental expectation and educational cramming, took on culturally totemic status in the debates on educational over-pressure in the ensuing decades, whilst Eliot's *Mill on the Floss* provided the framework for Leonard Guthrie's work on child psychiatry forty years later. The passionate novels of child development published at the mid-century focused cultural attention as never before on the thoughts and emotions of the growing child, opening up the silences of science. With the emergence of a psychology and psychiatry of childhood, literary texts were deployed as case studies, whilst literary works themselves responded to the new theories, exploring, commenting, and frequently challenging. *What Maisie Knew* stands as an implicit rebuke to all those armies of observers in the child study movement who believed that by measurement, tabulation, and minute scrutiny they would be able to give an account of the child mind.

Since Philip Aries published his authoritative work *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* (1962), there have been debates as to whether constructions of childhood have changed since the Middle Ages. If we take as our focus the child mind, it is clear there were incontrovertible shifts in understanding in the nineteenth century which still govern our frameworks of perception today. There is powerful evidence, as Linda Pollock has shown, that adults both loved and grieved for children in earlier centuries.<sup>25</sup> In the nineteenth century, for the first time, they sought to delve into the secrets of their minds.

The Victorians did not simply create new social spaces for the child to inhabit, they also granted the child a new interiority, a complex subjectivity, complete with passions and traumas which defied easy analysis. Whilst social attention focused, for the working-class child, on care for the body and physical well-being, there was a radical shift in responses to the middle-class

child. No longer a being who simply required to be cosseted, cared for, and controlled, the child of the middle and upper classes was also now granted a mind that needed to be understood. The child protagonists of those mid-century novels and autobiographies were not the passive sufferers of earlier literary incarnations but passionate, frightened, and spirited figures, who challenged injustice and sought to comprehend the source of their torments. The adult readers for whom the books were designed were asked to revisit their own memories, to withdraw their assumed condescension to the 'foolish fancies' of their younger selves, and to find in the fierce emotions and experiences of childhood the foundations of their adult identity. The first psychiatric accounts of childhood disorders published in the mid-century possessed neither the force nor the complexity of the literary studies, but they belong to the same shift in perspective: children are no longer adults in waiting, designated free from the afflictions which can accompany the assumption of full rational intelligence. Instead they are complex, frequently disturbed beings who are liable to the full range of adult mental disorders. They can also commit those most seemingly adult of acts: murder and suicide.

Whilst the mind of the child gained a new importance, as part of a continuum leading to adulthood, it was also accorded value, significantly, by virtue of its very difference from the adult state. Childhood for the Victorians was hedged around by fear: fear that it could at any moment lose its special qualities and mutate, too quickly, into the banality, or worse, of adult life. The debates concerning the educational over-pressure of the young were only one aspect of a wider concern with the potential loss of childhood, whether through brain-forcing, the too early development of sexuality, or the stamping out of imaginative powers. The rhetoric of loss acts as an index of the levels of emotional and intellectual investment locked up within the figure of the child. In Stanley Hall's vision of the young child set free to roam around the countryside we have a new version of Rousseau's natural child, but with a nineteenth-century twist. The child is not only like a savage, but the direct heir to primitive emotions. Stanley Hall inveighs against the treatment of both child and savage: 'The inexorable laws of forcing, precocity, severity, and overwork, produce similar results for both. Primitive peoples have the same right to linger in the paradise of childhood.'<sup>26</sup> Such 'paradise' is barely present in his work, however, which chronicles the disasters which await in adolescence when the burdens of a faulty inheritance are matched by the pressures of modern society so that 'There is not only

arrest, but perversion at every stage, and hoodlumism, juvenile crime, and secret vice seem not only increasing, but develop in earlier years in every civilized land.<sup>27</sup> The yearned for state of childhood is defined repeatedly by the extent of its loss. The figure of the hoodlum shadows the innocent child.

The child, for the Victorians, was a key to lost innocence and a touchstone, in an increasingly secular age, of personal identity, but it was also a witness to past civilizations, a creature of history, bearing the scars of heredity. Our own schizophrenia with reference to the figure of the child—an innocent to be protected at all costs, or a feral being to be feared—has its roots in the Victorian age. Although we might pride ourselves on our growing understanding of the child mind it is clear that there is no linear curve of progression. The issues addressed remain closely comparable, whilst many of the pronouncements, particularly with reference to education, could be transposed to current reports with only slight alterations in language. There is also some reassurance to be drawn from the recognition that our own fears have precedents: that we are not the first to witness an ‘epidemic’ of child suicide, or exam-induced anxiety, or to feel that our youth are increasingly running out of control.

As I have argued, there was no single, definitive image of the child mind at this period; rather, there were shared preoccupations which produced, in the various fields of inquiry, very different models and analyses of the inner life of the child. Thus the English versions of evolutionary psychology created a far more positive vision of the workings of heredity, and the child’s position within the evolutionary development of mankind, than the parallel discourse of psychiatry, fuelled as it was by the spectre of degeneration. I have sought in this work to open up the history of the emerging fields of child psychology and psychiatry, which took place not just in the professional spaces of the laboratory or hospital, but also in constant interplay with literary and cultural texts of the period; in newspapers and periodicals, both specialist and general; in public debate, and in the meetings of the numerous organizations which touched upon, and fed into, the Child Study Movement. Returning to texts and periodicals which have hitherto received very little scholarly attention, and placing them in a wider literary and cultural context, produces a new chapter in the early history of child psychology and psychiatry. Freud’s claim to have been the first to study the sexuality of the child, for example, no longer holds water: both literary and medical texts offer ample evidence of a much earlier preoccupation with this issue. In the field of psychology, a variety of scientific, popular, and

literary accounts offer fascinating evidence of the ways in which the Victorians sought to come to terms with the implications of Darwinian theory for ideas of childhood. Under the pressure of recapitulation theory the child is set much closer to the animal kingdom than the adult: a product of one's flesh, and resident in the same domestic space, but also a primitive or animal being. Late Victorian childcare manuals, taking this new perspective on board, are surprisingly lenient: in place of the repressive regime one might expect, parents are advised not to punish their erring child but rather to understand that it is barely human. Romanes, devising his chart to plot the continuum of animal and human development, sets the human child at the level of the mollusc by seven weeks, the rodent by ten months, and the monkey by twelve. The effect is to place the young child outside the domain of humanity. In post-Darwinian projections, the child might hold the secrets of the past, but is also alarmingly 'other'.

In all these developments literary texts played a definitive role, opening up initially the internal spaces of the child mind, suggesting hitherto unsuspected depths of emotions and thought, and then responding to, qualifying, and questioning scientific and medical theories. Literary texts did not simply supply material for medical case studies; as the example of Guthrie suggests, they also helped frame the questions and categories of an emerging scientific field. In the novels and autobiographies of the 1890s one finds writers taking seriously the new agenda of child psychology, reaching back to first memories to try to define the first emergence into self-consciousness, or exploring the child's perspective on the world. James's tale 'The Turn of the Screw', a disturbing study of an adult obsessed with prying into and possessing the secrets of a child's mind, provides, however, a welcome corrective to some of the excesses of child study. The governess's increasingly lurid speculations tell us nothing about the children who remain, to the end, indecipherable. Ellen Key, with her injunctions to parents to study their children perpetually, even when asleep, represents the near-hysterical side of a movement which turned the child mind into the foundation of adult authenticity and identity.

In Darwin's centenary year, when much attention is being paid to his legacy, and to the new developments in neuroscience which are taking understanding of the human mind onto a new plane, it is instructive to turn to the evolutionary sciences before genetics or brain mapping, when the first attempts were being made to understand the implications of evolutionary theory for human psychology. Much of the thinking, particularly with reference to the child, was crude and wildly speculative—we are no longer

likely to think that ‘rock a bye baby in the treetops’ offers evidence of our ‘arboreal ancestry’. There was also, however, subtle and sophisticated analysis. Both features may be found in the evolutionary sciences of the twenty-first century. The intrusive laboratory investigations of ‘the velocity of nerve currents, motor localizations, and the physical equivalents of will and feeling’ within the child, which so antagonized one commentator in the nineteenth century, have their modern electronic equivalents in the brain scan. It is unclear, however, whether such mapping alone, without the emotional depth and complexity supplied in the nineteenth century by corresponding literary texts, could ever begin to understand the role of the lie in childhood, or the construction of imaginary lands.



# Notes

## INTRODUCTION

1. In 2008 the charity Barnardos commissioned research, which appeared to show that 45% of people in the UK think that children are feral in the way they behave, and that 43% agree that something has to be done to protect us from children. See <[http://www.barnardos.org.uk/resources/resources\\_students\\_advertising/children\\_in\\_trouble\\_campaign.htm](http://www.barnardos.org.uk/resources/resources_students_advertising/children_in_trouble_campaign.htm)>.
2. The most influential work in this genre is Neil Postman, *The Disappearance of Childhood* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1982), which was published in the same year as an alternate account, C. John Sommerville, *The Rise and Fall of Childhood* (Sage Library of Social Research, 140; Beverly Hills, London, and New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1982).
3. The now classic analysis of this epistemic shift is offered by Michel Foucault in *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1974). The emerging historicism is defined by Maurice Mandelbaum, in *History, Man and Reason: A Study in Nineteenth Century Thought* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), as ‘the belief that an adequate understanding of the nature of any phenomenon and an adequate assessment of its value are to be gained through considering it in terms of the place it occupies within a process of development’ (p. 42).
4. Thomas De Quincey’s ‘Suspiria de Profundis’, for example, was first published in 1845, and his *Autobiographic Sketches* in 1853.
5. There are of course various honourable exceptions to this rule, including Dianne F. Sadoff, *Sciences of the Flesh: Representing Body and Subject in Psychoanalysis* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), which sets Freud’s work firmly in the context of 19th-c. psychiatry (although not with reference to the child).
6. Sigmund Freud, ‘Infantile Sexuality’, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vii: *A Case of Hysteria, Three Essays on Sexuality, and Other Works*, trans. and ed. James Strachey, in collaboration with Anna Freud (London: Vintage, The Hogarth Press, 2001), 173. An early challenge came in an article by Stephen Kern, ‘Freud and the Discovery of Child Sexuality’, *History of Childhood Quarterly*, 1 (1973), 117–41.

7. Janet Oppenheim offers an excellent chapter on 'Nervous Children' in *'Shattered Nerves': Doctors, Patients and Depression in Victorian England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), ch. 7.
8. See e.g. the otherwise good short histories offered in Alexander Walk, 'The Pre-history of Child Psychiatry', *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 110 (1964), 754–67; Alexander Von Gontard, 'The Development of Child Psychiatry in Nineteenth Century Britain', *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 29 (1988), 569–88. Michael Neve and Trevor Turner offer a slightly broader-based account in 'History of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry', in Michael Rutter and Eric Taylor (eds.), *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 4th edn. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 382–95 at 382–7.
9. Interestingly, the first major study of childhood in Victorian fiction, Peter Coveney's *The Image of the Child: The Individual and Society. A Study of the Theme in Literature* (1957, rev. edn. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), includes as part of its historical narrative a section on Freud's 'Essay on Infantile Sexuality'. It does not, however, look any further at 19th-c. psychological theories. There have been many more specialized studies since, but Coveney's book still remains the most comprehensive study of childhood in Victorian literature, although for contemporary readers its highly judgemental attitudes towards the various authors discussed, based on a very crude psychologizing, is off-putting. Thus he argues, for example, that 'The Turn of the Screw' is not 'a significant work of James's art, but the product of a seriously disordered sensibility. It is not really a piece of literary analysis at all; but something patently for the psychiatrist' (p. 210).
10. Carolyn Steedman in *Strange Dislocations: Childhood and the Idea of Human Interiority, 1780–1930* (London: Virago, 1995), similarly argues that in the late 18th and early 19th cc., 'the child-figure becomes a central vehicle for expressing ideas about the self and its history' (p. 5). Her work, like mine, draws together the fields of physiology (but not psychiatry) and literature, although her focus lies primarily on emerging cell theory. Cora Kaplan in her study of *Jane Eyre* draws on the parallels between the child and savage in Victorian racial theory; see "'A heterogeneous thing": Female Childhood and the Rise of Racial Thinking in Victorian Britain', in Diana Fuss (ed.), *Human, All Too Human* (Routledge: New York, 1996), 169–202. See also Claudia Castañeda, *Figurations: Child, Bodies, Worlds* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2002), ch. 1, 'Developmentalism and the Child in Nineteenth-Century Science', 12–45.
11. As Frank Sulloway and Stephen Jay Gould have shown, recapitulation was central to Freud's theories. It emerges most obviously in *Totem and Taboo* (1913), where Freud argues in the preface that his aim is 'to deduce the original meaning of totemism from the vestiges remaining of it in childhood—from the hints of it which emerge in the course of the growth of our own children' (quoted in Stephen Jay Gould, *Ontogeny and Phylogeny* (Cambridge, Mass.:

- Harvard University Press, 1977), 160). See Gould, pp. 155–62, and Frank J. Sulloway, *Freud, Biologist of the Mind: Beyond the Psychoanalytic Legend* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992). Jean Piaget's theories of the stages of cognitive development were strongly influenced by the work of James Mark Baldwin, *Mental Development in the Child and the Race: Methods and Processes* (New York and London: Macmillan, 1895).
12. Since the publication of Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1962) there have been fierce debates about the 'invention' of childhood (see Hugh Cunningham, *The Invention of Childhood* (London: BBC Books, 2006)). Although there are many questionable assumptions and interpretations in Ariès's account, which cannot simply be transposed onto English society, I would concur with Cunningham that we can see new conceptions of childhood arising in the 18th c. which were consolidated in the 19th. Such shifts were evident in the material sphere as children, identified as a group with their own needs, acquired in the 18th c., as J. H. Plumb has pointed out, their own literature and toys. See J. H. Plumb, 'The New World of Children in 18th-Century England', in N. McKendrick, J. Brewer, and J. H. Plumb (eds.), *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of 18th-Century England* (London: Europa Publications, 1982). The most recent addition to this literature, Anthony Fletcher's *Growing up in England: The Experience of Childhood, 1600–1914* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), remains resolutely agnostic.
  13. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile*, trans. Barbara Foxley, intro. P. D. Jimack (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1974), 1.
  14. Michael Bell in *Open Secrets: Literature, Education, and Authority from J.-J. Rousseau to J. M. Coetzee* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) offers a sophisticated analysis of authority in *Émile*, noting that Rousseau's 'whole method of imaginary authority in the writing of *Émile* was a systematic elision of the pupil's will which Locke at least frankly acknowledged' (p. 51).
  15. Rousseau, *Émile*, 54.
  16. *Ibid.* 57, 80. The one interesting exception Rousseau makes here is *Robinson Crusoe*, which the child should take as his guide for living (p. 147).
  17. *Ibid.* 282.
  18. The calculation is that of Jacques Pons, *L'Éducation en Angleterre entre 1750 et 1800, aperçu sur influence pédagogique de Jean-Jacques Rousseau en Angleterre* (Paris, 1919), cited in Julia V. Douthwaite, *The Wild Girl, Natural Man and the Monster: Dangerous Experiments in the Age of Enlightenment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 134 n. 4. This work offers an excellent introduction to 18th-c. debates surrounding the 'wild child' and the child of nature.
  19. See Douthwaite, *The Wild Girl*, ch. 4. Douthwaite notes that Richard Lovell, Jr, who ran away to sea at 15, was a possible model for Jane Austen's character of Dick Musgrove in *Persuasion*, a 'troublesome and hopeless son' who was sent to sea 'because he was stupid and unmanageable on shore' (p. 138).

20. For a discussion of *Sandford and Merton* and its descendants, see Greg Myers, 'Science for Women and Children: The Dialogue of Popular Science in the Nineteenth Century', in John Christie and Sally Shuttleworth (eds.), *Nature Transfigured: Science and Literature, 1700–1900* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), 171–200.
21. William Wordsworth, *The Prelude: A Parallel Text*, ed. J. C. Maxwell (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), Bk. V, ll. 290–343, from the text of the unpublished 1805–6 version.
22. Judith Plotz, *Romanticism and the Vocation of Childhood* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), ch. 2. Plotz's excellent work looks at the writings of the male Romantics who found a vocation in arresting and invoking childhood. For in-depth analyses of Romantic writers' responses to educational theories see Alan Richardson, *Literature, Education and Romanticism: Reading as Social Practice, 1780–1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), and Alan Bewell, *Wordsworth and the Enlightenment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).
23. The line was composed as part of the poem 'My heart leaps up', written in 1802 and first published in 1807, and was also attached as a new epigraph to his great 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood' in that same year. For a compelling analysis of the influence of Wordsworth on the Victorian literary sensibility see Stephen Gill, *Wordsworth and the Victorians* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).
24. Nikolas Rose, *The Psychological Complex: Psychology, Politics and Society in England 1869–1939* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), 12.
25. Wilhelm Preyer in Germany led the field; his *Die Seele des Kindes* [The Mind of the Child] was published in 1881; that of Bernard Perez in France, *The First Three Years of Childhood*, was published in England with a preface by James Sully in 1885. Sully's major work, *Studies of Childhood*, was published in 1895, but he published articles on the area from the 1880s and his *Outlines of Psychology with Special Reference to the Theory of Education* (1884) offered an explicit focus on the child mind. G. Stanley Hall did not publish his main work, *Adolescence*, until 1904, but was publishing articles in the field of child development from the early 1890s.
26. Charles Darwin, *T. H. Huxley: Autobiographies*, ed. Gavin de Beer and Hugh Cunningham (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983).
27. Charles Darwin, 'A Biographical Sketch of an Infant', *Mind: A Quarterly Review of Psychology and Philosophy*, 2 (1877), 285–94. The full text of the original notebook is published in *The Correspondence of Charles Darwin*, ed. F. Burkhardt et al., in progress (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985– ), iv. 410–33.
28. The two boys were tried, initially without question, in an adult criminal court, although a subsequent appeal to the European Court of Human Rights in 1999, on the grounds that the trial was not impartial, was successful, resulting in pressure being put on the British government to change policy with regard to placing juveniles on trial in an adult court.

29. Elizabeth Rossiter, 'Unnatural Children', *Fortnightly Review*, NS 31 (1882), 612–19 at 613. The influential movements for reform of the physical conditions of the working-class child have already been substantially chronicled, and lie outside the central focus of this study. In *Child Welfare: England 1872–1989* (London: Routledge, 1994), Harry Hendrick notes, 'Broadly speaking, when social scientists, philanthropists, doctors, and educationalists and reformers looked at children in the period, say, 1870–1914, they saw "bodies"' (p. 3). I aim to redress the critical balance, and to explore the ways in which they also looked at minds.
30. H. Sutton, 'Children and Modern Literature', *National Review*, 13 (1892), 507–19 at 507. Interestingly, Sutton does not differentiate, as we tend to now, between literature for children and literature representing children. The writer singles out George Eliot for praise, arguing that no one can compare with her representations of children (p. 513).
31. There are numerous studies of children's literature at this period. See in particular Humphrey Carpenter, *Secret Gardens: A Study of the Golden Age of Children's Literature* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1985); J. S. Bratton, *The Impact of Victorian Children's Fiction* (London: Croom Helm, 1981); Penny Brown, *The Captured World: The Child and Childhood in Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing in England* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), and U. C. Knoepfelmacher, *Ventures into Childland: Victorians, Fairy Tales, and Femininity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998). David Grylls's influential work *Guardian Angels: Parents and Children in Nineteenth-Century Literature* (London: Faber and Faber, 1978) contains a very helpful overview of children's books at the period, prefaced by a salutary warning: 'Children's books are written by adults; they depict the child as his elders imagine him. They chart not so much the changing ways of childhood as the development of the adult imagination' (p. 74). For a different perspective on children's literature, see Shirley Foster and Judy Simons, *What Katy Read: Feminist Re-readings of 'Classic' Stories for Girls* (London: Macmillan, 1995). Jacqueline Rose, in *The Case of Peter Pan, or The Impossibility of Children's Fiction* (London: Macmillan, 1984), offers a sophisticated analysis, drawing on Freudian theory, of the constructions of childhood innocence and the adult investment in these notions, which lie behind the creation of literature supposedly for children. Her book is written as a challenge to 'the ongoing sexual and political mystification of the child' (p. 10). Tess Cosslett in *Talking Animals in British Children's Fiction, 1786–1914* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), offers a fascinating analysis of this genre which, in its exploration of the relationship between the animal and child in relation to language, complements my own work, particularly in chapter 5, which focuses on the 'wild animal stories' of Kipling and Ernest Thompson Seton, setting them in the context of evolutionary biology.
32. Juvenile magazines with the best fictional elements include *The Monthly Packet*, edited by Charlotte Yonge from 1851 to 1890; *Aunt Judy's Magazine*, founded by Margaret Gatty in 1866, and subsequently edited by her daughter Juliana

Ewing; the *Boy's Own Paper*, founded in 1879; and the *Girl's Own Paper*, founded in 1880.

33. The divisions between literature for children and for adults were more blurred than our historical analyses often tend to suggest, with many texts now classified as 'children's literature' being read by adults as well as children.
34. For further discussion of the problems of demarcation see Steedman, *Strange Dislocations*, 7.
35. T. S. Clouston, 'Puberty and Adolescence Medico-Psychologically Considered', *Edinburgh Medical Journal*, 26 (1880), 5-17.
36. T. S. Clouston, *The Hygiene of Mind*, 4th edn. (London: Methuen and Co., 1907). These divisions form the chapter headings for chs. 10-12.
37. See e.g. J. E. D. Esquirol, *Mental Maladies: A Treatise on Insanity*, trans. E. K. Hunt (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1845; repr. New York: Hafner Publishing, 1965), 379.
38. Clouston, 'Puberty and Adolescence', 14.
39. The first book of *Daniel Deronda* (1876), which introduces Gwendolen Harleth, is entitled 'The Spoiled Child'.

#### CHAPTER I: THE EMERGENCE OF CHILD PSYCHIATRY

1. Leonard Guthrie, *Functional Nervous Disorders in Childhood* (London: Henry Frowde and Oxford University Press, 1907), 4-5. Guthrie was Senior Physician to the Paddington Green Children's Hospital.
2. Guthrie, *Functional Nervous Disorders*, p. 7. Guthrie slightly misquotes, he adds in 'to pass', and changes the original 'firmer' to 'finer'.
3. George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss*, ed. Gordon S. Haight (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 65-6.
4. *Ibid.* 66.
5. Guthrie, *Functional Nervous Disorders*, 8, 9.
6. Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss*, 33, 273.
7. Guthrie, *Functional Nervous Disorders*, 10-11.
8. Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss*, 88, 99.
9. The lengthy description offers numerous other parallels with Eliot's text, including a terrier who excels at 'ratting' and an interesting rewriting of Tom's rabbit-keeping which now, in line with his general disdain for the animal kingdom, becomes evidence of the 'unemotional person's' general callousness, for he 'will be capable of fattening tame rabbits in order to increase his pocket-money by selling them for his own dinner' (p. 11). Guthrie's rewriting is both monotonal and antagonistic; it misses entirely Eliot's analysis of the ways in which Tom is also trapped by his inheritance and upbringing.
10. A full account of the rich history of child psychiatry prior to Freud would of course have to take in developments in France, Germany, Italy, and America. My focus, however, lies on the particular ways in which this area developed in Britain.

11. Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss*, 13, 64, 105–7.
12. Anne Brontë, *Agnes Grey*, ed. Robert Englesfield and Hilda Marsden (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 31.
13. Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, ed. Margaret Smith, 2nd edn., rev. Sally Shuttleworth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 12.
14. *Ibid.* 7.
15. For details on theories of partial insanity see Roy Porter, *Mind-forg'd Manacles: A History of Madness in England from the Restoration to the Regency* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987), and also Sally Shuttleworth, *Charlotte Brontë and Victorian Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), ch. 3.
16. For a discussion of these issues see Roger Smith, *Trial by Medicine: Insanity and Responsibility in Victorian Trials* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981).
17. Smith, for example, cites the case of a servant acquitted in 1845 of the murder of one of her employer's children on the grounds of insanity probably arising from obstructed menstruation; *ibid.* 155.
18. *Ibid.* 3.
19. See Nikolas Rose, *The Psychological Complex: Psychology, Politics and Society in England 1869–1937* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), 38: 'It was from the space of pathology that the possibility of a knowledge of the normal child arose.' See also Rose, *Governing the Soul*, 130–1.
20. Unsigned, 'A Lunatic Ball', *All the Year Round*, NS 9 (1872–3), 349–52 at 352.
21. James Crichton Browne, 'Psychical Diseases of Early Life', *Asylum Journal of Mental Science*, 6 (1860), 284–320 at 287.
22. Henry Maudsley, *The Pathology of Mind: A Study of its Distempers, Deformities and Disorders*, 2nd edn. (London: Macmillan and Co., 1895), 364.
23. Crichton Browne, 'Psychical Diseases', 286.
24. *Ibid.* 320.
25. Crichton Browne, 'Psychical Diseases', 298.
26. Maudsley, *The Pathology of Mind*, 367.
27. John Haslam, *Observations on Madness and Melancholy: Including Practical Remarks on Those Diseases; Together with Cases: And an Account of the Morbid Appearances in Dissection*, 2nd edn. (London: J. Callow, 1809), 199.
28. *Ibid.*, pp. i, v. The Dr Johnson quotation is from *Rasselas*.
29. Haslam, *Observations on Madness*, 229–30, 236.
30. *Ibid.* 237.
31. Isaac Watts, *The Doctrine of the Passions* (London: no publ., 1729). The work of the 18th-c. divine remained extraordinarily influential through the 19th c.
32. Esquirol, *Mental Maladies*, 34. Esquirol was a pupil of Philippe Pinel, and one of the strongest influences on the development of early Victorian psychiatry.
33. The association of innocence and imbecility is a recurrent theme in the literature of the time, from Wordsworth's 'The Idiot Boy' (1798) to George Eliot's story 'Brother Jacob' (1864).
34. Esquirol, *Mental Maladies*, 371.

35. Richardson, *Literature, Education and Romanticism*, 72.
36. See Smith, *Trial by Medicine*, for details on the growth of the insanity defence, and also Joel Peter Eigen, *Unconscious Crime: Mental Absence and Criminal Responsibility in Victorian London* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).
37. Esquirol, *Mental Maladies*, 49.
38. See e.g. Mrs Henry Wood, *St Martin's Eve* (1866), although here, unusually, Charlotte inherits her insanity from her father, rather than her mother.
39. Esquirol, *Mental Maladies*, 152.
40. On lypemania see *ibid.* 210–11. Esquirol draws on the work of the German physician Henke with reference to incendiarism, but suggests that the situation in France is not quite the same as in Germany, pp. 360–1.
41. *Ibid.* 279–81.
42. *Ibid.* 379.
43. All of these forms occasioned excited literary interest during the 19th century Wordsworth's poem 'The Idiot Boy' was the first of many treatments, whilst Charlotte Brontë included 'a poor deformed and imbecile pupil, a sort of crétin' in *Villette* (1853), and Elizabeth Gaskell wrote a story, 'An Accursed Race', focused on the cagots, an outcast people of northern Spain, first published in Dickens's periodical *Household Words*, in 1855.
44. Esquirol, *Mental Maladies*, 471.
45. James Cowles Prichard, *A Treatise on Insanity and Other Disorders Affecting the Mind* (London: Sherwood, Gilbert and Piper, 1835), 16.
46. *Ibid.* 55.
47. Thomas Mayo, *Elements of the Pathology of the Human Mind* (London: John Murray, 1838), 181.
48. Forbes Benignus Winslow (1810–74), had given medical evidence in the Daniel McNaughtan trial which had brought about the creation of the McNaughtan Rules.
49. Winslow had funded his medical education by acting as a reporter for *The Times* (ODNB).
50. See the report of the trial, *The Times*, 16 Dec. 1847, p. 7, and the editorial on Mr Baron Rolfe's summary, *ibid.*, 17 Dec. 1847, p. 6, which firmly supported the judge's rejection of the insanity plea. This was followed by a further editorial, 24 Dec., p. 4, reinforcing the paper's support of Baron Rolfe's position, in response to a lengthy letter of complaint from Dr Duesbury, who had been one of the medical witnesses in the case.
51. John Conolly, *On Some of the Forms of Insanity: The Croonian Lectures. Delivered at the Royal College of Physicians, London in 1849* (1849; repr. York: Ebor Press, 1960), 84, 83. The lectures were first published in the *Lancet* in 1849, before book publication that year.
52. *Ibid.* 83.
53. Unsigned, 'Baron Rolfe's Charge in the Case of the Boy Allnut—the Plea of Insanity in Criminal Cases', *Journal of Psychological Medicine and Mental Pathology*, 1 (1848), 193–205 at 201, 205.



54. George Sigmond, 'On Hallucinations', *Journal of Psychological Medicine and Mental Pathology*, 1 (1848), 585–608. Unsigned, 'On Impulsive Insanity', *ibid.* 609–22 at 611.
55. T. C. Morison, 'Case of Mania Occurring in a Child Six Years Old', *Journal of Psychological Medicine and Mental Pathology*, 1 (1848), 317–18 at 317. Unsigned, 'Dr Ideler on Religious Insanity', a review of *Religious Insanity, Illustrated by Histories of Cases; a Contribution to the History of the Religious Errors of the Age*, by K. W. Ideler (Professor of Medicine and Clinical Psychiatry at the University of Berlin), *Journal of Psychological Medicine and Mental Pathology*, 1 (1848), 229–46 at 232–3.
56. [Forbes Winslow], 'On the Education of Children Predisposed to Insanity', a review of *The Use of the Body in Relation to the Mind*, by George Moore (member of the College of Royal Physicians), and *Practical Hints on the Moral, Mental, and Physical Training of Girls at School*, by Mme de Wahl, *Journal of Psychological Medicine and Mental Pathology*, 1 (1848), 489–99. Although the review is unsigned, its language and concerns bear little relation to those of the works under review, and are in keeping with Winslow's views expressed elsewhere. Sections of this review are later reproduced by Winslow's son, L. S. Winslow, in *Youthful Eccentricity: A Precursor of Crime* (London; 1895). My edition, however (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1895), advertises itself as by Winslow himself. It is possible that the truth lies between these two, that Lytton actually drew up the book from his father's writings. Certainly a good deal of the material appears to stem from the *Journal of Psychological Medicine*. See e.g. vol. 1, p. 490, and *Youthful Eccentricity*, 41.
57. [Winslow], 'On the Education of Children', 491.
58. S. A Tissot's work *L'Onanisme* (1760) was first translated into English by Alexander Hume, MD, as *Onanism: Or, a Treatise upon the Disorders Produced by Masturbation* in 1781. For a history of concerns about masturbation at this period see Thomas Laqueur, *Solitary Sex: A Cultural History of Masturbation* (New York: Zone Books, 2003).
59. Claude François Lallemand's *A Practical Treatise on the Causes, Symptoms, and Treatment of Spermatorrhoea* was first translated into English in 1847, and reviewed in the second volume of the *Journal of Psychological Medicine and Mental Pathology* in 1849. One frequently advertised pamphlet was that by R. and L. Perry and Co., consulting surgeons, *The Silent Friend; A Practical Work, Treating on the Anatomy and Physiology of the Organs of Generation, and their Diseases, with Observations on Onanism and its Baneful Results* (London: no publ., 1854).
60. [Winslow], 'On the Education of Children', 492–3, 494.
61. Forbes Winslow, *On the Incubation of Insanity* (London: S. Highley, 1846), 8. The work was privately printed. Winslow sent an inscribed copy to Dickens; see *Catalogue of the Library of Charles Dickens, Esq.*, ed. J. H. Stonehouse (London: Piccadilly Fountain Press, 1935), 88.
62. [Winslow], 'On the Education of Children', 496.
63. *Ibid.* 498.

64. W. M. Bush, 'Juvenile Delinquency and Degeneration in the Upper Classes of Society', *Journal of Psychological Medicine and Mental Pathology*, 2 (1849), 428–55 at 430.
65. *Ibid.* 440.
66. *Ibid.* 430, 455.
67. See e.g. Thomas John Graham, *Modern Domestic Medicine* (London: Simpkin and Marshall et al., 1826); William P. Dewees, *A Treatise on the Physical and Medical Treatment of Children* (London: John Miller, 1826); Robert Ellis, *Disease in Childhood, its Common Causes, and Directions for its Practical Management* (London: G. Cox, 1852). Richard T. Evanson and Henry Maunsell, *A Practical Treatise on the Management and Diseases of Children*, 3rd edn. (Dublin: Fannin and Co., 1840) has a section on 'Mental and Moral Education', although it notes: 'Disorders strictly to be called nervous do not occur in childhood, though the nervous system is so susceptible and so subject to disturbance' (p. 85). Children suffer instead from spasms or convulsions. Thomas Ballard, *A Rational Explanation of the Diseases Peculiar to Infants and Mothers: With Obvious Suggestions for their Prevention or Cure* (London: John Churchill, 1860), includes a short section 'On the Nervous Disorders of Infants', but these are entirely physiological, caused largely by 'fruitless sucking' (p. 23).
68. Forbes Winslow, 'A Psychological Quarterly Retrospect', *Journal of Psychological Medicine and Mental Pathology*, 9 (1856), pp. i–xxiv at viii.
69. 'It is a subject which has recently been handled in four fictions: in the "House of Raby", in Miss Jewsbury's "Constance Herbert," in Holme Lee's "Gilbert Messenger," and in Wilkie Collins's "Moncktons of Wincot Abbey"'. George Henry Lewes, 'Hereditary Influence, Animal and Human', *Westminster Review*, NS 10 (1856), 135–62 at 158 (repr. in *Journal of Psychological Medicine and Mental Pathology*, 10 (1857), 384–402 at 399–400). George Eliot had earlier reviewed Geraldine Jewsbury's novel in the *Westminster Review*, where she adopted a slightly different line, agreeing with the argument that marriage was best avoided where there was insanity in the family, but suggesting that the moral would actually have been stronger if the groom who was renounced was more worthwhile. George Eliot, 'Belles Lettres', *Westminster Review*, NS 8 (1855), 288–307 at 294–6.
70. Unsigned, 'On the Degeneracy of the Human Race', *Journal of Psychological Medicine and Mental Pathology*, 10 (1857), 159–208. The article is a review of R. A. Morel, *Traité des dégénérescences physiques, intellectuelles et morales de l'espèce humaine; et des causes qui produisent ces variétés maladives* (Paris, 1857), which was to prove so influential for Henry Maudsley and later theories of degeneration. Morel's emphasis, however, is on the evils of drink, poisonous atmospheres, and malnourishment affecting the working classes, all of which, he suggests, can be cured if caught in time. His programme is not pessimistic, but aims rather for 'the intellectual, moral, and physical amelioration of man' (p. 208).
71. *Ibid.* 198.
72. S. M. Bemiss, 'On Marriages of Consanguinity', *Journal of Psychological Medicine and Mental Pathology*, 10 (1857), 368–79. The article addressed the popular

- anxieties regarding inbreeding and the marriage of close relatives, confirming the view that the closer the relation, the more negative the effects upon the offspring. Briere de Boismont, 'On the Insanity of Early Life', *Journal of Psychological Medicine and Mental Pathology*, 10 (1857), 622–38.
73. The journal continued for a further three volumes, 1861–3, under the title *Medical Critic and Psychological Journal*. In 1875 it was revived for eight years under its original title, edited now by Winslow's son, L. S. Forbes Winslow.
  74. The journal was initially titled *Asylum Journal of Mental Science* until it adopted its better-known title in 1858.
  75. John Conolly was the most influential advocate in England of a system of managing the insane by 'moral' means, rather than by the traditional methods of physical restraint. His work *The Treatment of the Insane without Mechanical Restraints* was published in 1856. He was superintendent of the Middlesex County Lunatic Asylum at Hanwell in 1839–44, and his practice there was frequently cited as an example of what could be achieved in a large public asylum without the use of restraint.
  76. John Conolly, 'Recollections of the Varieties of Insanity: Part II', *Medical Times and Gazette*, 1 (1862), 27–9, 130–2, 234–6, 372–4; *Medical Times and Gazette*, 2 (1862), 2–4.
  77. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 2.
  78. Conolly, 'Recollections of Insanity', vol. 1, pp. 130, 234.
  79. *Ibid.* 130.
  80. *Ibid.* 131.
  81. An account of the case is given in Forbes Winslow, 'Psychological Quarterly Retrospect', *Journal of Psychological Medicine and Mental Pathology*, 13 (1860), pp. lxiii–lxxvi at lxviii–lxx.
  82. Conolly, 'Recollections of Insanity', vol. 2, p. 3.
  83. Henry Maudsley, 'Memoir of the Late John Conolly', *Journal of Mental Science*, 12 (1866), 151–74 at 159, 158, 160, 173.
  84. Conolly, 'Recollections of Insanity', vol. 1, pp. 131–2.
  85. *Ibid.* 131.
  86. *Ibid.* 234.
  87. *Ibid.* 235.
  88. *Ibid.* 235–6.
  89. *Ibid.* 374.
  90. Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830–1980* (New York: Pantheon, 1985), 75–8.
  91. Isaac Baker Brown, *On the Curability of Certain Forms of Insanity, Epilepsy, Catalepsy and Hysteria in Females* (London: Robert Hardwicke, 1866), 16: 'Although there is no doubt that patients may suffer from peripheral irritation of the pubic nerve from the earliest childhood, I never operate or sanction an operation on any patient under ten years of age, which is the earliest date of puberty.'
  92. At the beginning of his work, Baker Brown lists a number of doctors who have adopted his views and treatment, including the eminent Sir James

Simpson. He claims the practice as his own idea, in response to Brown Sequard's theories of nerve irritation. Conolly's comments, however, suggest at least comparable practices were well established on the Continent at this time. In his 1835 work on onanism, subsequently translated into English as *Manhood: The Causes of its Premature Decline, with Directions for its Perfect Restoration*, the French physician Leopold Deslandes gives an account of his fellow physician amputating a girl's clitoris at the request of her parents. To those who might have scruples about such an operation he agrees there should be caution exercised, 'But when life is to be saved, or the mind is to be preserved, then we ought not to hesitate.' He notes the operation does not entirely extinguish desire, but even if it did, 'still this operation ought to be performed; as, without these feelings of love, a female may become a good mother and devoted wife' (trans. from the French by an American Physician (Boston: Otis, Broaders and Company, 1843), 191–2).

93. Conolly, 'Recollections of Insanity', i. 374.
94. Crichton Browne, 'Psychical Diseases', 286.
95. James Crichton Browne was, however, the son of the distinguished W. A. F. Browne, medical superintendent of the Crichton Royal Institution, Dumfries (from which Browne drew his middle name). He later heightened the connection by altering his surname in mid-career to the hyphenated, and presumably more distinguished, Crichton-Browne.
96. Crichton Browne, 'Psychical Diseases', 301.
97. *Ibid.* 289. Howe's 1848 report on idiocy for the Legislature of Massachusetts became the basis of his book *On the Causes of Idiocy* (Edinburgh: Maclachlan and Stewart, 1858).
98. W. A. F. Browne was medical superintendent of the Crichton Royal Institution 1838–57. He was author of one of the key reforming texts of the period, *What Asylums Were, Are, and Ought to Be: Being the Substance of Five Lectures Delivered before the Managers of the Montrose Royal Lunatic Asylum* (Edinburgh: Black; London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green and Longman, 1837). Crichton Browne is here drawing on his father's work, *Intemperance and Insanity* (Edinburgh: Johnstone & Hunter et al., 1851).
99. Crichton Browne, 'Psychical Diseases', 291.
100. *Ibid.* 312–13.
101. *Ibid.* 308.
102. Hannah More, 'Strictures on Female Education', in *The Works of Hannah More*, 18 vols. (London, 1818), vii. 67; quoted in Hugh Cunningham, 'The Rights of the Child from the Mid-Eighteenth to the Early Twentieth Century', in *Children at Risk: Aspects of Education, Journal of the Institute of Education, The University of Hull*, 50 (1994), 2–16 at 5.
103. Crichton Browne, 'Psychical Diseases', 303.
104. Henry Maudsley, *The Physiology and Pathology of the Mind* (London: Macmillan, 1867), 259–93.

105. See Gould, *Ontogeny and Phylogeny*, Part I, for a thorough analysis of 19th-c. theories of recapitulation.
106. James Crichton Browne, 'Education and the Nervous System', in Malcolm Morris (ed.), *The Book of Health* (London: Cassell & Co., 1883), 269–380 at 379.
107. Wordsworth completed the 'Two Part Prelude' in 1799, and the first version of the thirteen-book Prelude in 1805. He continued to revise the latter until 1839, when it was laid aside, and not published until after his death in 1850. Published with the subtitle 'Growth of a Poet's Mind', Wordsworth had also referred to it more specifically in letters as a poem 'on my earlier life or the growth of my own mind' (letter to George Beaumont, 25 Dec. 1804). It is important to note that so many of the major passages of this poem, which we take as defining moments of Romantic constructions of the child mind, were not in fact available to the reading public until 1850.

## CHAPTER 2: FEARS, PHANTASMS, AND NIGHT TERRORS

1. Crichton Browne, 'Psychical Diseases of Early Life', 303–5.
2. Anna Jameson, 'A Revelation of Childhood', in *A Commonplace Book of Thoughts, Memories, and Fancies, Original and Selected*, repr. in *Records of Girlhood: An Anthology of Nineteenth-Century Women's Childhoods*, ed. Valerie Sanders (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 76–88 at 77.
3. In *Records of Girlhood*, ed. Sanders, 77.
4. Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, ed. Smith, 2nd edn., rev. Shuttleworth, 7.
5. In *Records of Girlhood*, ed. Sanders, 80.
6. *Ibid.* 81.
7. *Ibid.*
8. [Aubrey De Vere], 'Review of *Poems by Hartley Coleridge. With a Memoir of his Life. By his Brother. And Essays and Marginalia by Hartley Coleridge*', *Edinburgh Review*, 94 (1851), 64–97 at 71.
9. *Ibid.* 71.
10. John Barlow, *On Man's Power over Himself to Prevent or Control Insanity* (London: William Pickering, 1843). The book was based on a lecture given by the Revd Barlow to the Royal Institution, and was then published in a cheap, accessible edition for general readers (Small Books on Great Subjects).
11. *Ibid.* 12. The classic case used in virtually all discussions of this subject was that of a bookseller, Nicolai of Berlin, who was subject to visitations from various apparitions, but realized they were delusions, and so kept his sanity. See John Conolly, *An Inquiry Concerning the Indications of Insanity, with Suggestions for the Better Protection and Care of the Insane* (1830), repr. with introduction by Richard Hunter and Ida Macalpine (London: Dawsons, 1964), 109.
12. One possible candidate is John Abercrombie's influential work *Inquiries Concerning the Intellectual Powers and the Investigation of Truth* (Edinburgh:

Waugh and Innes, 1830). The work warns that one departure from the rigorous path of truth could sow the seeds of insanity: 'The first volition by which the mind consciously wanders from the truth, or the moral feelings go astray from virtue, may impart a morbid influence which shall perpetuate itself and gain strength in future volitions, until the result shall be to poison the whole intellectual and moral system. Thus, in the wondrous scheme of sequences which has been established in the economy of the human heart one volition may impart a character to the future man,—the first downward step may be fatal' (p. 431).

13. In *Records of Girlhood*, ed. Sanders, 81.
14. Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 17.
15. See *Harriet Martineau's Autobiography, with Memorials by Maria Weston Chapman*, 3 vols., 3rd edn. (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1877), ii. 324. For further details see the Introduction to *Jane Eyre*, pp. x–xi. The essays which were to form *Household Education* were part-serialized in the *People's Journal*, 1846–7.
16. Harriet Martineau, *Household Education* (London: Smith and Elder & Co., 1849), 90.
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Ibid.* 99.
19. Writing his memoirs of his 1840s childhood at the close of the century, J. A. Symonds seems to draw on an extended legacy of literary and medical discussions of childhood visions. He speaks explicitly of his 'night terrors', when he saw lights and heard 'phantasmal noises', 'Yet I did not dread the dark so much as the light of a rush-candle burning in a perforated cylinder of japanned metal, which cast hideous patterns on the roof and walls of the nursery'. *The Memoirs of John Addington Symonds*, ed. Phyllis Grosskurth (London: Hutchinson, 1984), 38. Symonds was born in 1840 and commenced his memoir in 1889. He attributes his nervous disposition to the 'neurotic temperament' bequeathed to him by his mother. The work was written, in part, as a justification of his homosexuality, which he saw as inborn within him. Never published in his lifetime, it was bequeathed by his literary executor, Horatio Brown, on his own death in 1826, to the London Library, 'with instructions that it was not to be published until fifty years after his death' (p. 9).
20. Henry Morley, *Jerome Cardan: The Life of Girolamo Cardano, of Milan, Physician*, 2 vols. (London: Chapman and Hall, 1854), i. 35, 38, 37.
21. Leigh Hunt, *The Autobiography of Leigh Hunt, with Reminiscences of Friends and Contemporaries, and with Thornton Hunt's Introduction and Postscript*, ed. Roger Ingpen, 2 vols. (London: Archibald Constable, 1903), i. 37.
22. *Prefaces &c.*, ed. Frederick Burwick (The Works of Thomas De Quincey, xx; London: Pickering and Chatto, 2003), 12.
23. *Autobiographic Sketches*, ed. Daniel Sanjiv Roberts (The Works of Thomas De Quincey, xix; London: Pickering and Chatto, 2003), 12. The first volume of the *Sketches* draws together material published earlier, including 'Suspiria de

- Profundis' from *Blackwood's Magazine* in 1845 and a series of articles in *Hogg's Instructor*, 1851–2, 'A Sketch from Childhood'.
24. See e.g. Graham, *Modern Domestic Medicine* (1826), which was owned, and frequently consulted, by the Brontë family.
  25. Robert Macnish, *The Philosophy of Sleep* (Glasgow: W. R. McPhun, 1830), 55.
  26. *Ibid.*
  27. Macnish's work formed part of extensive investigations into the phenomena of visions, dreams, and apparitions in the early Victorian period, from David Brewster's *Letters on Natural Magic* (1832) and John Abercrombie's *Inquiries Concerning the Intellectual Powers and Investigation of Truth* (1843) to the more down-market *The Night Side of Nature* (1848), by Catherine Crowe.
  28. Macnish, *Philosophy of Sleep*, 136.
  29. See Dickens, *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, vi: 1850–52, ed. G. Storey, K. Tillotson, and N. Burgis (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 276–7. Dickens owned the later 1838 edition of *The Philosophy of Sleep*. For a discussion of Dickens's work in the context of Victorian dream theory see Catherine A. Bernard, 'Dickens and Victorian Dream Theory', in James Paradis and Thomas Postlewait (eds.), *Victorian Science and Victorian Values* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1985), 269–98. Another influential discussion of dreams at this period was Samuel Hibbert, *Sketches of the Philosophy of Apparitions: Or An Attempt to Trace Such Illusions to their Physical Causes* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1824), which was also owned by Dickens. Hibbert opens his text with an epigraph from John Ferriar, *An Essay towards a Theory of Apparitions* (London: Cadell and Davies, 1813), from which he draws an account of the now obligatory story of Nicolai of Berlin. For a discussion of the Revd Brontë's annotations in his copy of *Modern Domestic Medicine*, see Shuttleworth, *Charlotte Brontë and Victorian Psychology*, ch. 2.
  30. For an account of Charles Dickens's support of the hospital see Jules Kosky, *Mutual Friends: Charles Dickens and Great Ormond Street Hospital* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1989). Dickens wrote a strong appeal on behalf of the hospital, 'Drooping Buds', which was published in *Household Words*, 3 April 1852, shortly after the hospital opened (ch. 8). He continued his involvement, with an impassioned speech at a fund-raising dinner in 1858 (ch. 10). Unfortunately, there are no records surviving of any discussions between Charles West and Dickens on the subject of childhood illnesses.
  31. Charles West, *Lectures on the Diseases of Infancy and Childhood* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1848), 127. The only source he cites is a German pamphlet, by Dr Hesse of Altona, *Über das nächtliche Aufschrecken der Kinder in Schläfe* (Altenburg, 1845), but he dismisses Hesse's claim that the condition is an independent disease.
  32. Even Macnish, who had imbibed many more Romantic attitudes to dreaming, believing that 'Dreams are the media under which imagination unfolds the ample stores of its richly decorated empire', also invoked the digestive processes as

a form of explanation: 'Why are literary men, deep thinkers, and hypochondriacs peculiarly subject to night-mare? The cause is obvious. Such individuals have generally a bad digestion'; *Philosophy of Sleep*, 96, 143. Explanations of dreams based on digestive disorders can be traced back to classical times. See Jennifer Ford, *Coleridge on Dreaming: Romanticism, Dreams and the Medical Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 10–17.

33. See e.g. T. H. Tanner, *A Practical Treatise on the Diseases of Infancy and Childhood* (London: Henry Renshaw, 1858), 276–9. An even earlier example is that of Ellis, *Disease in Childhood* (1852). Although the text refers to West's work (see p. 187), it does not cite him in reference to night terrors, although the lengthy description reads like an impassioned development of West's prose. Thus West's warning that a child should not be left to lie in the dark 'without a candle, while its active imagination conjures up before its eyes out of the bed-curtain, or other objects in the room, the outlines of all sorts of terrific forms' (p. 131) becomes an extended section on the 'Evils of Curtains': 'There should be no curtains to a child's bed. The hideous forms which the imagination of many poor children, when out of health, conjures up enshrouded in these curtains, which then become the recesses where frightful phantoms lurk, renders it of consequence to remove any such source of disturbance' (p. 247).
34. Night terrors is still very much a live concern today, as witnessed by the numerous websites designed for anxious parents. The description of the condition is largely unchanged—a repeated disturbance of sleep characterized by a state of extreme terror and an inability to regain full consciousness. It is seen to occur mostly in children between 2 and 6, and is experienced, the Wikipedia site claims, by around 15 per cent of children. It has been distinguished from nightmare by the fact that it occurs in non-REM sleep, rather than the REM sleep of nightmare. It is also now thought that there can be a genetic predisposition. See the US site Medline Plus, a service of the National Library of Medicine and the National Institutes of Health, <<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/000809.htm>>.
35. Charles West, *Lectures on the Diseases of Infancy and Childhood*, 3rd edn. (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1854), 188.
36. *Ibid.* 189.
37. Erasmus Darwin had argued, for example, in *The Botanic Garden*, that 'in sleep there is a total suspension of voluntary power, both over the muscles of our bodies and the ideas of our minds' (4th edn., 1799), quoted in Ford, *Coleridge on Dreaming*, 24. Dugald Stewart offered a similar theory in *Elements of the Human Mind* (1814) when he argued that the mind in sleep follows the same laws of association as in waking life, except that 'the will loses its influence over those faculties of the mind, and those members of the body which in waking hours are subjected to its authority' (quoted in Bernard, 'Dickens and Victorian Dream Theory', 198).



38. West, *Lectures on the Diseases of Infancy* (1854), 189.
39. Brontë herself was of course aware of the category of moral insanity, writing in one of her letters that Bertha Mason was an example of 'moral madness'. Letter to W. S. Williams, 4 Jan. 1848. *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë, with a Selection of Letters by Family and Friends*, ed. Margaret Smith, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), ii. 3.
40. Charles West left nineteen volumes of case notes from 1838 to 1880, which are stored in the archives at The Hospital for Sick Children, Great Ormond Street, together with the books from his library.
41. Although Crichton Browne was to draw on the *Journal of Psychological Medicine* in his own pronouncements, there is no direct reference to the journal in West's work in this context.
42. Crichton Browne, 'Psychical Diseases of Early Life', 304–5, 303–4, 313. The pagination of Crichton Browne's citation of West suggests he was using the first edition; his details on Hartley Coleridge were drawn from the *Edinburgh Review* article cited above.
43. See Jennifer Ford, *Coleridge on Dreaming*, and Alan Richardson, *British Romanticism and the Science of the Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
44. Peter Logan, *Nerves and Narratives: A Cultural History of Hysteria in Nineteenth-Century British Prose* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), ch. 5, offers a very sophisticated reading of *Harrington*, linking it to Dugald Stewart's theories of the 'contagion of sympathetic imitation' (p. 120).
45. For a short discussion of associationism, and its reworking in the Victorian period, and a selection of primary texts, see *Embodied Selves: An Anthology of Psychological Texts 1830–1890*, ed. Jenny Bourne Taylor and Sally Shuttleworth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 65–162.
46. John Locke, in *Thoughts on Education*, sect. 138, had blamed childhood fears on wicked nurses and servants 'whose usual method is to awe children and keep them in subjection by telling them of Raw Head and Bloody Bones, and such other names as carry with them the idea of something terrible and hurtful, which they have reason to be afraid of when alone, especially in the dark'. John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, ed. J. W. Yolton and J. S. Yolton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), sect. 138, pp. 196–7.
47. Martineau, *Household Education*, 98. Crichton Browne made a similar point with reference to the effect of terrifying tales. He follows an account of a child frightened, literally, to death by the idea of a figure on a gibbet with a severe warning: 'Most culpable are those who compel timid, nervous children to sleep alone in the dark, and who amuse them by narrating horrific tales'; 'Psychical Diseases', 313.
48. Mary Poovey has discussed the transgressive force of the figure of the governess who simultaneously entered the domain of paid employment but also took over the roles of the mother within the home. See Mary Poovey, *Uneven*

- Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England* (London: Virago, 1989), ch. 5, 'The Anathematized Race: The Governess and *Jane Eyre*'. Similar arguments can be made with reference to the nurse who also, in the case of the wet-nurse, takes on the most intimate physical role of motherhood.
49. The essay, first published in *All the Year Round* in 1860, formed part of Charles Dickens's collection *The Uncommercial Traveller*, published subsequently in that year. Charles Dickens, *The Uncommercial Traveller and Reprinted Pieces* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), 150.
  50. Dickens, 'Nurse's Stories', *ibid.* 156.
  51. Charles Lamb, 'Witches, and other Night-fears', in *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. E. V. Lucas, 2 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903; repr. New York: AMS Press, 1968), ii. 67–8. The book referred to is Thomas Stackhouse, *New History of the Holy Bible from the Beginning of the World to the Establishment of Christianity* (1733).
  52. Lamb, 'Witches', 68.
  53. See Plotz, *Romanticism and the Vocation of Childhood*, 108.
  54. Lamb, 'Witches', 67–8, 68. Coleridge had similarly turned to a theory of dreams that relied on the notion of forms external to the individual mind, drawing on Andrew Baxter's *Enquiry into the Nature of the Human Soul* (1733), which suggested that beings or spirits enter the mind during sleep. See Ford, *Coleridge on Dreaming*, 18–22.
  55. Robert Brudenell Carter, *On the Influence of Education and Training in Preventing Diseases of the Nervous System* (London: John Churchill, 1855), 196.
  56. *Ibid.* 343.
  57. *Ibid.* 345.
  58. Darwin, 'A Biographical Sketch of an Infant', 288. The notes for this article were originally written nearly forty years before, in 1839–42, in his notebook recording the development of his son, William. In the original entry, written on 2 Apr. 1842, Darwin noted his 'instinctive feeling of fear'. Although he does not explicitly assign it to an inherited instinct he suggests 'This fear has certainly come without any experience of danger or hurt, & may be compared to your mice trembling at a cat the first time, they see one.' The original notebook is reprinted in *The Correspondence of Charles Darwin*, ed. Frederick Burkhardt and Sydney Smith, 15 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), iv, 'Appendix III, Darwin's observations on his children', 410–33 at 422.
  59. James Sully, *Illusions: A Psychological Study* (1881; 3rd edn., London: Kegan, Paul, Trench and Co., 1887), 281.
  60. James Sully, *Studies of Childhood* (1895; 2nd edn, London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1896; repr. London: Routledge/Thoemmes Press, 1993), 208–9, 213–14.
  61. *Ibid.* 220–1.
  62. Sarah Grand, *The Beth Book: Being a Study of the Life of Elizabeth Caldwell Maclure, a Woman of Genius*, intro. Elaine Showalter (1897; New York: Dial Press, 1980), 27–8.

63. *Memoirs of John Addington Symonds*, ed. Grosskurth, 40, 92. The direct reference is to Lamb's essay 'Dream Children: A Reverie', one of the First Series of *Essays of Elia*, published in the *London Magazine*, 1822. The narrator, courting a girl who had been his playmate, sees in her earlier forms, 'what might have been, and must wait upon the tedious shores of Lethe millions of years'.
64. Sully, *Studies of Childhood*, 226.
65. Sigmund Freud, 'Infantile Sexuality', in *The Standard Edition*, vii: *A Case of Hysteria, Three Essays on Sexuality; and Other Works*, 224 n. 1.
66. Bruce H. Addington, *Handicaps of Childhood* (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., 1917), 243, 261.
67. Maudsley, *The Pathology of Mind*, 370. The book is a reworking of *The Physiology and Pathology of the Mind* (1867), which did not contain this passage.
68. Guthrie, *Functional Nervous Disorders in Childhood*, 40–1 offers a lengthy summary and quotations from Martineau on childhood fears as well as discussion of Lamb on 'Witches and Night Fears', and Leigh Hunt's *Autobiography* (1850). Discussion of Martineau and Lamb recurs on pp. 71–7, of Dickens on pp. 73–4 (including 'Nurse's Stories'), and De Quincey on p. 53 (on his claim that children can die of grief). He also draws upon the life of Jerome Cardan (p. 69).
69. Guthrie, *Functional Nervous Disorders*, 74. Charles Dickens, 'Chatham Dockyard', in *The Uncommercial Traveller*.

### CHAPTER 3: LIES AND IMAGINATION

1. Isaac Watts, *Dr Watts's Divine and Moral Songs* (Frank Goodchild's Little Library; London: Ward and Lock, 1860), 5–6. Originally published in 1715, Watts's *Divine Songs* were endlessly reprinted in the 19th c., with a particular concentration of new editions in the mid-century. This version is from a series of texts for children, costing 2d. each.
2. Crichton Browne, 'Psychical Diseases', 303.
3. George Savage, 'Moral Insanity', *Journal of Mental Science*, 27 (1881), 147–55 at 150.
4. Crichton Browne, 'Psychical Diseases', 303.
5. [Forbes Winslow], 'On the Education of Children Predisposed to Insanity', 496. In his early book *On the Preservation of the Health of Body and Mind* (London: Henry Renshaw, 1842) Winslow had also singled out the dangers of building castles in the air, quoting Johnson's *Rasselas* to support his contention that 'the disposition to *reverie* is very pernicious to intellectual health' (p. 172).
6. The Victoria and Albert Museum holds a copy of a sampler with this text, done by a young girl. See Dorothy Margaret Stuart, *The Girl through the Ages* (London: George G. Harrop, 1933), 221. [Frederick Gale], 'Wrongs of my Boyhood', *Cornhill Magazine*, 3 (1861), 95–103 at 98. Watts drew his original text from Revelation 21: 8: 'But the fearful, and the unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars,

shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death' (Authorized Version).

7. Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, ed. Smith, rev. Shuttleworth, 34–5.
8. The *Children's Friend* ran from 1824 through into the 20th c. By 1845 it was estimated to be selling around 3,000 copies per issue.
9. 'Lying', *Children's Friend*, 1 (1824), 140–1.
10. Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 66.
11. Mrs Reed, according to Mr Brocklehurst, was forced to send Jane away 'from her own young ones, fearful lest her vicious example should contaminate their purity' (p. 67).
12. Elizabeth Sewell, *Autobiography* (1907). See Brian Ridgers, "'What I earnestly longed for . . .': Elizabeth Missing Sewell, Writing, Autobiography and Victorian womanhood", in Julia Swindells (ed.), *The Uses of Autobiography* (London: Taylor and Francis, 1995), 138–50 at 145.
13. The punishment Jane received was mild compared to that described in a moral tale for children from a slightly earlier period. In W. F. Sullivan, *Young Wilfred; Or, the Punishment of Falsehood. A Tale of Truth and Caution for the Benefit of the Rising Generation* (London: Dean and Munday, 1821), all boys in the school are encouraged to beat a boy who has lied, resulting in a semi-pornographic depiction: 'the culprit was now fastened to a desk, and each young gentleman advanced in rotation and inflicted a stripe, till the number of 200 was unsparingly bestowed. We may judge of the spectacle his back exhibited . . .'. Wilfred is then kept in a dark room until his wounds were sufficiently healed for him to be removed from the school, when he was 'saluted with the groans and hisses of the whole school assembled; and had they not been strictly prohibited, they would have pelted him to the imminent danger of his life'. Reproduced in Andrew W. Tuer, *Pages and Pictures from Forgotten Children's Books* (London: The Leadenhall Press, 1898–9), 399–402 at 399.
14. John Kucich, *The Power of Lies: Transgression in Victorian Fiction* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), 13. See also George Levine, *Dying to Know: Scientific Epistemology and Narrative in Victorian England* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2002).
15. Old Chatty Cheerful, *How Do You Manage the Young Ones?*, Household Tracts for the People, 9th edn., 46th thousand (London: Jarrold and Sons, n.d.), 17.
16. Anna Jameson, *A Commonplace Book*, 112.
17. Jameson, 'A Revelation of Childhood', *Commonplace Book*. The essay is reproduced in *Records of Girlhood*, ed. Sanders, 76–88 at 80. The issue of the relations between truth and fiction has an interesting personal dimension with reference to Jameson's own career. As her ODNB entry records, her only work of fiction was her first publication, *The Diary of an Envyee* (1826), which appeared first anonymously as *A Lady's Diary*. The work had a melodramatic plot in which a woman dies for love, and there was a minor sensation when it was discovered that it was not actually based on fact. Although in her major work on

- Shakespeare's heroines and her volumes on *Sacred and Legendary Art* (1848–52, with a posthumous final volume in 1864) Jameson focused extensively on myth, legend, and dramatic creation, she never again confused in her own writing the categories of truth and fiction.
18. Martineau had at this point in her career published extensive fiction, from the rather forced combination of economics and fiction in *Illustrations of Political Economy* (1831) to the fully-fledged novel *Deerbrook* (1839).
  19. Martineau, *Household Education*, 166.
  20. Martineau, *Household Education*, 163, 170.
  21. Savage, 'Moral Insanity', 151.
  22. Martineau, *Household Education*, 154. She is here conflating the exhortations of the Epistle of James 3: 5: 'Even so the tongue is a little member', and 3: 8: 'But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.'
  23. Howe, 'On the Causes of Idiocy', 389.
  24. *Ibid.* 390.
  25. M. H. Uteley, *Didactic Elucidations Respecting the Original Sin: Or, The Sin of Imagination and its Consequences, Morally, Physically, Mentally: A Warning to the Young, Advice to the Afflicted, Important Suggestions to Parents, Guardians, Ministers of the Gospel and Teachers* (Montreal: no publ., 1874).
  26. Robert P. Ritchie, *An Inquiry into a Frequent Cause of Insanity in Young Men* (London: Henry Renshaw, 1861), sees masturbation itself as a primary cause of insanity, while Henry Maudsley, 'Illustrations of a Variety of Insanity', *Journal of Mental Science*, 14 (1868), 149–62, sees it as a symptom of the wider lack of control exhibited in the 'mania of pubescence'.
  27. Ennis Richmond, *The Mind of a Child* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1901), 41–2.
  28. Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 36–7.
  29. Brontë makes a similar claim for *Jane Eyre* itself in her preface to the second edition, where she suggests that the entire novel is a bid to tear off the veils of social hypocrisy and expose the truth. The world has found it convenient 'to make external show pass for sterling worth—to let white-washed walls vouch for clean shrines. It may hate him who dares to scrutinize and expose—to raise the gilding and show base metal under it—to penetrate the sepulchre, and to reveal charnel relics: but hate as it will, it is indebted to him'; p. 4.
  30. Elizabeth Missing Sewell, *Amy Herbert* (1844: London: Longmans, Green and Co., n.d.), 321.
  31. *Ibid.* 32.
  32. *Ibid.* 288.
  33. Sarah Grand, *The Heavenly Twins* (London: William Heinemann, 1894), 28, 42, 43.
  34. John Kucich offers an interesting analysis of *The Heavenly Twins* in terms of a contradiction between honesty and performance. See Kucich, *The Power of Lies*, ch. 6.

35. Mrs Thomas Spurr, *Course of Lectures on the Physical, Intellectual, and Religious Education of Infant Children. Delivered before the Ladies of Sheffield* (Sheffield: Gen. Ridge, Mercury Office, 1836), 24, 27.
36. Charlotte M. Yonge, *Womankind* (London: Mozley and Smith, 1876), 19.
37. Robert Louis Stevenson, 'Child's Play', *Cornhill Magazine*, 38 (1878), 352–9 at 352–3, 357.
38. *Ibid.* 358–9.
39. See e.g. Carpenter, *Secret Gardens: A Study of the Golden Age of Children's Literature*. Carpenter argues that the birth of children's literature in the mid-to late 19th c. offered an alternative Eden to a Victorian age which had lost its early hopefulness.
40. Sully, *Studies of Childhood*, 2nd edn., 251.
41. The quotation, from Perez, *L'Éducation dès le berceau*, is given in Gabriel Compayré, *L'Évolution intellectuelle et morale de l'enfant* (1893), trans. Mary E. Wilson as *The Intellectual and Moral Development of the Child*, Parts I and II (International Education Series; New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1902–6), Part II, p. 198. Sully cites the original French version in his text.
42. Compayré, *Intellectual and Moral Development*, Part II, p. 200. The question of children bearing false witness in court was the subject of a study in France by M. Motet in 1887, *Les Faux Temoignages des enfants devant la justice*.
43. Sully, *Studies of Childhood*, 264.
44. *Ibid.* 252.
45. *Ibid.* 251–66.
46. *Ibid.* 256–7. Sully draws his example from Frances Hodgson Burnett's autobiography, *The One I Knew the Best of All* (London: Frederick Warne and Co., 1893). For further discussion of this text see ch. 15.
47. Sully, *Studies of Childhood*, 258.
48. *Ibid.* 263.
49. G. M. Guyau, *Education and Heredity: A Study in Sociology*, trans. W. J. Greenstreet (London: Walter Scott, 1891), 204–5. Sully draws on Guyau (p. 253), but via the work of Compayré. Guyau, who was a poet as well as a philosopher, shared Sully's interests in aesthetics, and offered a similarly positive view of the child as an imaginative artist.
50. Stanley Hall's original article, 'Children's Lies', was published in the *American Journal of Psychology* (1890). I am drawing here on his reworking of this material, in the light of more recent work on criminology, in his magnum opus, *Adolescence, its Psychology and its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education*, i. 349–53.
51. *Ibid.* i. 350.
52. *Ibid.* 349. Hall draws on the work of the Italian criminologist Lino Ferriani, 'who personally studied 500 condemned juveniles with reference to their lying habits' and divided their falsehoods into nine classes. The research, it seems,

was founded on the assumption, unquestioned by Hall, that juvenile criminals are always liars; pp. 352–3.

53. *Ibid.* 352.

54. *Ibid.* 353.

55. *Ibid.* 352.

56. Eleanor Farjeon, *A Nursery in the Nineties* (1935; London: Oxford University Press, 1960), 252. Harry's horror of a lie also co-existed, as I will explore in the next section, with a whole-hearted devotion to an alternate imaginative world, inhabited with his sister, which even had its own secret language.

#### CHAPTER 4: IMAGINARY LANDS

1. The first stanza of Wordsworth's poem to the young Hartley Coleridge, composed in 1802, and published in 1807. It was written around the same time as 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood' (also published in 1807, with the subtitle added in 1815), to which it is closely related in its idealization of childhood.
2. Unsigned, 'The Passions', *Journal of Psychological Medicine and Mental Pathology*, 3 (1850), 141–64 at 151.
3. Hartley was, of course, more beloved in the textual realm, inspiring 'Frost at Midnight' and many other poems by members of the Romantic circle, than in actual practice, having little contact with his father for most of his life. See Judith Plotz's excellent discussion of Hartley, the 'designated genius', and his father's 'lovingly abusive relationship' to him in *Romanticism and the Vocation of Childhood*, ch. 5. Wordsworth's poem, which simultaneously celebrates Hartley's visionary qualities while seeming to wish death upon this 'exquisitely wild' child, highlights the problems created when poetic ideals are imposed on an actual child. For Wordsworth, it seems, children retain their symbolic qualities of pure, untrammelled imagination only if consigned to an early grave.
4. Crichton Browne, 'Psychical Diseases of Early Life', 303–4.
5. Hartley Coleridge, *Poems. With a Memoir of his Life by his Brother*, 2 vols. (London: Edward Moxon, 1851), i, p. xxxviii.
6. *Ibid.*, p. xli n.
7. *Ibid.*, p. li.
8. *Ibid.*, p. vii. We are informed the plate is 'engraved by Hall from an interesting sketch by Wilkie'.
9. A similarly damning verdict was offered the following year by Charles Dickens in *Bleak House* (1852–3) in his depiction of Leigh Hunt as Harold Skimpole, who does not simply remain a child, but rather cynically constructs his self-image as that of a child, not merely to evade adult responsibilities, but to give countenance to his naked immorality.
10. Wordsworth, 'To H. C. Six Years Old'.
11. *Poems*, i, p. xxxvii.

12. *Ibid.*, pp. xxviii–xxix.
13. Crichton Browne, ‘Psychical Diseases’, 303–4. His primary source is the *Edinburgh Review* article of 1851, which quotes extensively from the memoir [A. De Vere] ‘Review of *Poems by Hartley Coleridge*. De Vere argued: ‘That such movements of mind, however indicative of genius, are yet unhealthy if indulged habitually, encouraged artificially, or left unbalanced by opposite habits, can hardly be doubted’ (p. 70). Crichton Browne skilfully conflates quotations from the memoir to reinforce his point, creating one seemingly continuous quotation from various sections, so that the description of Eujuxria is followed by observations on Hartley’s infirmity of will and intense sensibility, which ‘he had not wherewithal to control’ and could lead to paroxysms of rage (from p. lix in the memoir).
14. Crichton Browne, ‘Psychical Diseases’, 304–5.
15. Anna Jameson, *A Commonplace Book*, repr. in *Records of Girlhood*, ed. Sanders, 76–88 at 82.
16. George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss*, ed. Haight, 276. For Dr Kenn’s counselling of Maggie, see pp. 494–8.
17. Elizabeth Gaskell, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, intro. May Sinclair (London: J. M. Dent, 1908), 57.
18. *Ibid.* 59.
19. For helpful discussions of 19th-c. juvenilia, and an annotated bibliography, see the excellent book edited by Christine Alexander and Juliet McMaster, *The Child Writer from Austen to Woolf* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
20. The existence of ‘The Prelude’ had long been known, and its publication, in the mid-century, confirmed Wordsworth’s role as presiding genius within the emerging field of child studies. None of the autobiographical memoirs discussed in this section, however, draws on this text.
21. ‘Suspiria de Profundis’ was first published in four instalments in *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* in 1845, and subsequently in book form together with *Confessions of an Opium Eater* in 1851. The seven-part series of ‘A Sketch from Childhood’ was first published in *Hogg’s Instructor* in 1851–2 and then recast in the first volume of *Autobiographic Sketches* (1853). The Pickering Masters *Works of Thomas de Quincey* edited by Grevel Lindop gives the full text of the *Hogg’s Instructor* articles (vol. 17) and also *Autobiographic Sketches* (vol. 19). For ease of reference I will use the text of *Autobiographic Sketches*, but note where it differs significantly from the earlier version.
22. *An Edition of the Early Writings of Charlotte Brontë*, ed. Christine Alexander, 2 vols. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987– ). See also Christine Alexander, *The Early Writings of Charlotte Brontë* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983).
23. Thomas De Quincey, *Autobiographic Sketches*, ed. Roberts, 24, 28–9.
24. *Ibid.* 27.
25. *Ibid.* 25.



26. Ibid. 26, 47.
27. Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss*, Bk. 1, ch. 10.
28. De Quincey, *Autobiographic Sketches*, 45.
29. Ibid. 46.
30. Ibid. 52.
31. Ibid. 53.
32. Although the interaction of the Brontë siblings within their imaginary kingdoms was less a cause for strife and suffering, one can similarly discern ways in which the worlds of Angria and Gondal became the focus for rivalry and power struggles, as when Branwell killed off one of Charlotte Brontë's favourite characters, Mary Henrietta, whilst she was away, and she subsequently decides to revive her. (See Alexander, *The Early Writings*, 154–6.)
33. Gaskell's story 'An Accursed Race' was published in Dickens's periodical *Household Words* in 1855. It formed part of the new interest in idiots and their reclaimability, sparked in England initially by the publication of her brother-in-law Samuel Gaskell's articles in *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*, NS 7 (1847), 'Visit to the Bicêtre', 20–2; 'Education of Idiots at the Bicêtre', 70–3, and 105–7.
34. De Quincey, *Autobiographic Sketches*, 57 n.
35. Sully, *Studies of Childhood*, 2nd edn., 28.
36. Ibid. 55.
37. Stanley Hall, 'Children's Lies', *American Journal of Psychology*, 3 (1890), 59–70 at 67, 65.
38. Eleanor Farjeon, *A Nursery in the Nineties* (1935; London: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp. 258, 272. Further references are given in the text.
39. The summary of content of their fantasies, however, suggests that sexuality was not in itself absent from the games: Farjeon not only won and lost duels, but 'had mistresses and been them' and 'loved and been loved', in a 'phantasmagoria of experience that life could not have offered me at that stage' (p. 324). The argument is perhaps that in inhabiting both sexes she lost sight of her own, and the form of experience itself was utterly distinct from understanding acquired in the everyday world.
40. Robert Louis Stevenson, "'Rosa Quo Locorum'" (1896), in *Further Memories* (London: Heinemann et al., 1923), 1–8 at 1. Cited in Julia Reid, *Robert Louis Stevenson, Science, and the Fin de Siècle* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 25. This work offers an excellent guide to the close connections between the work of Stevenson and Sully and contemporary anthropology.

#### CHAPTER 5: PASSION

1. Unsigned, 'Danger of Passion', *Children's Friend* (1828), 42. Other stories include 'The Angry Child' (1834), 10–16, which recounts how a 5-year-old girl, in a 'perfect transport of fury', was told the story by her mother of Anna, Countess of Livingston, who, as a child, had been informed by wicked servants

that her mother would no longer love her now she had a new baby. In her upset, Anna threw a smoothing iron at the baby's cradle, and killed it. On the 'angry child' sobbing and saying she is not as bad as that, the mother shows her that she is actually worse, since she cannot blame wicked servants. Good parents or teachers, in this periodical, always take pains to impress upon their charges the enormity of their sins.

2. Mary Elliott, *Flowers of Instruction, or Familiar Subjects in Verse* (London: William Darton, 1820). As Mary Benson, the author had already produced numerous books for children in a similar vein.
3. Tuer, *Pages and Pictures from Forgotten Children's Books*, 9.
4. Anon., *Ellen, or the Naughty Girl Reclaimed: A Story, Exemplified in a Series of Figures* (Printed for S. and J. Fuller, 1811). The work was part of a series which included *Little Fanny* (which, displaying an admirable sense of domestic economy, reused the figure of Ellen for Fanny); *Little Henry*; and *Frederick, or the Effects of Disobedience*.
5. Anon., *Sketches of Juvenile Characters, Exhibited in the Curious Girl Cured; and The Life of an Angry Boy* (London: E. Wallis, 1820). The title page of the individual tale changes the title to read 'the angry Boy'.
6. James Parkinson, *Medical Admonitions to Families, respecting the Preservation of Health, and the Treatment of the Sick . . . with Observations on the Improper Indulgence of Children*, 4th edn. (London: H. D. Symonds et al., 1801), 520, 521.
7. Prichard, *A Treatise on Insanity*, 131.
8. [Winslow], 'On the Education of Children Predisposed to Insanity', 492.
9. West, *Lectures on the Diseases of Infancy and Childhood*, 3rd edn., 198. See also id., *The Mother's Manual of Children's Diseases* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1885), 223.
10. Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, ed. Smith, rev. Shuttleworth, 11, 221–2.
11. Anne Brontë, *Agnes Grey*, ed. Inglesfield and Marsden, 31.
12. *Ibid.* 27.
13. *Ibid.* 25.
14. *Ibid.* 51.
15. Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 26.
16. For an excellent discussion of *Mrs Halliburton's Troubles* see Andrew Mangham, *Violent Women and Sensation Fiction: Crime, Medicine and Victorian Popular Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), ch. 4.
17. Jacques Joseph Moreau, *La Psychologie morbide* (Paris: Victor Masson, 1859), 312. The *Journal of Psychological Medicine* had carried a review article on Moreau's work on childhood insanity under the title 'Mixed Insanity—Reason and Madness' in vol. 3 (1850), 490–500.
18. [Ellen Wood], 'St Martin's Eve', *New Monthly Magazine*, 99 (1853), 327–42 at 331.
19. Mrs Henry Wood, *St Martin's Eve*, 424, 426.
20. Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 239–40.
21. Yonge, *Womankind*, 12, 22.

22. Charlotte M. Yonge, *Countess Kate* (1862; 4th edn., Boston: Loring, 1866), 45, 47.
23. George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss*, ed. Haight, 12, 16. All further references to this edition will be given in the text. Darwin had been circulating material to other naturalists long before publication, and his joint paper with Wallace had been read out at the Linnean Society on 1 July 1858. Eliot and G. H. Lewes purchased the *Origin* on its day of publication in Nov. 1859 and read it instantly. For further discussion of Eliot's responses to Darwin, and the impact on her work, see Gillian Beer, *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narratives in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (1983; 2nd edn., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); George Levine, *Darwin and the Novelists: Patterns of Science in Victorian Fiction* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988), and Sally Shuttleworth, *George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).
24. *Jane Eyre*, for example, took great comfort from her doll. Whilst Brontë does not describe it in anthropological terms as a fetish, it is nonetheless a 'graven image': 'To this crib I always took my doll: human beings must love something and, in the dearth of worthier objects of affection, I contrived to find a pleasure in loving and cherishing a faded graven image, shabby as a miniature scarecrow.' Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 28.
25. Eliot was very familiar with Comte's work, which had a great influence on her thought in the 1850s, from her partner Lewes's *Comte's Philosophy of the Sciences* (London, 1853) and Harriet Martineau's *The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte*, 2 vols. (London: John Chapman, 1853). Peter Logan has also discussed *The Mill on the Floss* in relation to fetishism. See Peter M. Logan, 'George Eliot and the Fetishism of Realism', *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, 35 (2002), 27–51.
26. Martineau, *The Positive Philosophy*, ii. 186.
27. *Ibid.*, i. 3.
28. Edward B. Tylor, *Researches into the Early History of Mankind and the Development of Civilization* (1865; 2nd edn., London: John Murray, 1870), 108.
29. Edward B. Tylor, *Researches into the Early History of Mankind and the Development of Civilization*, 111.
30. The *John Brown Bible* was first produced in 1778, and subsequently republished frequently during the 19th c. This edition is from 1816. The old Bible figures repeatedly in *The Mill*, including the scene where Mr Tulliver makes Tom write in the front that he does not forgive Wakem and wishes evil to befall him (pp. 265–7). Assuming that Eliot is drawing on her own childhood memories, a Bible published in 1778 would be around fifty years old when she was Maggie's age.
31. Martineau, *The Positive Philosophy*, ii. 194.
32. G. H. Lewes, 'Uncivilised Man', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 89 (1861), 27–41 at 39.
33. E. B. Tylor did not employ his famous term 'survivals' until his 1869 essay, 'The Survival of Savage Thought in Modern Civilization', published in *Proceedings of the Royal Institute* (ODNB).

34. Chapter 2 of Bk. 3 is entitled 'Mrs Tulliver's Teraphim, or Household Gods', linking her with pre-Christian practices. As the chapter suggests, her concerns following their bankruptcy are far more for her household goods than her children.
35. Earlier, when Stephen came to woo Maggie at her aunt Moss's, her determination to reject him was suggested by the fact that she put on her bonnet (p. 445).
36. Guthrie, *Functional Nervous Disorders*, 8.

#### CHAPTER 6: THE FORCING APPARATUS: *DOMBEY AND SON*

1. Dickens was deeply concerned that the title of his new work should not leak before publication. He writes to John Forster on 18 July 1846: 'I know you will impress on B. & E. the necessity of the closest secrecy. The very name getting out, would be ruinous'; *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, iv: 1844-46, ed. Kathleen Tillotson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 586. Tillotson speculates that this is because the title, particularly in its full form, represents a new departure for Dickens.
2. Charles Dickens, *Dombey and Son*, ed. Andrew Sanders (London: Penguin, 2002), p. xxxiii. All further references will be given in the text.
3. The work was purely for his children and was not designed for publication, but was eventually published in 1934, under the title *The Life of Our Lord*.
4. Jameson, 'A Revelation of Childhood', in *Commonplace Book*, repr. in *Records of Girlhood*, ed. Sanders, 76-88 at. 79.
5. See T. J. Graham, *On the Management and Disorders of Infancy and Childhood* (London: Simpkin, Marshall and Co., 1853), 163. For a brief discussion of breastfeeding and wet-nurses at this period see Sally Shuttleworth, 'Demonic Mothers: Ideologies of Bourgeois Motherhood in the Mid-Victorian Period', in Linda M. Shires (ed.), *Rewriting the Victorians: Theory, History, and the Politics of Gender* (London: Routledge, 1992), 31-51 at 38-41. Margaret Wiley, 'Mother's Milk and Dombey's Son', *Dickens Quarterly*, 13 (1996), 217-28, considers the role of the wet-nurse in the novel and Dickens's own family, although the emphasis on the wet-nurse as a transmitter of syphilis seems misplaced in this connection, and it is questionable whether wet-nurses were 'invariably fallen women' (p. 223).
6. See e.g. Dewees, *A Treatise on the Physical and Medical Treatment of Children* (1826), which divides its sections into (1) birth to weaning, (2) weaning to second dentition, (3) second dentition to puberty, and includes a chapter 'Of the Diseases arising from Dentition', p. 350.
7. *OED*. The first usage is given as 1844, with *Dombey and Son* also cited. For an excellent discussion of the old-fashioned child and Dickens's interpretations of childhood, see Malcolm Andrews, *Dickens and the Grown-Up Child* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994), esp. ch. 7.
8. Dickens to Lord Morpeth, 20 June 1846, repr. in *Letters*, iv. 566.

9. See Dickens to John Forster, ?28 June 1846, and to Dr James Kay-Shuttleworth, 28 Mar. 1846, repr. *ibid.* 573–5, 526–7. Whilst working on the *Daily News* Dickens had contributed a piece on ‘Crime and Education’, 4 Feb. 1846.
10. See Dickens to John Forster, ?12 July 1846, repr. in *Letters*, iv. 583–5. For praise of the Swiss schools see his earlier letter to Forster, p. 574, and his letter to Douglas Jerrold, 24 Oct. 1846, pp. 642–5. For Dickens’s responses to Laura Bridgeman see *American Notes* (1842; London: Chapman and Hall, 1912), ch. 3, pp. 44–52.
11. Andrews, *Dickens and the Grown-Up Child*, 116.
12. For the details linking Mrs Pipchin and Mrs Roylance see *Letters*, iv. 653 n. 4.
13. Froebel, a follower of Rousseau and Pestalozzi (under whom he trained 1808–10), published *The Education of Man* in 1826, but it was not translated into English until 1885. The first kindergarten was established in Germany in 1840, and by 1851, when the first English one was set up in Tavistock Place, London, there were over fifty in Germany. Dickens’s periodical *Household Words* ran a very positive article on the Tavistock Place kindergarten by Henry Morley, ‘Infant Gardens’, on 21 July 1855 (11, 21 July 1855, pp. 577–82). Dickens was to be a frequent visitor to the kindergarten. In his important *Dickens and Education* (London: Macmillan, 1965), Philip Collins notes that this image of the flower ‘recalls the vocabulary of “progressive” educationists such as Froebel’ (p. 139) without any further referencing, although earlier on he had insisted that ‘There is no reason to believe that [Dickens] read or was otherwise influenced by Froebel, or any other important educational theorist’ (p. 18). Collins over-emphasizes Dickens’s lack of reading and intellectual contacts. Dickens himself was to be lionized by the Froebelians later in the century; see James L. Hughes, ‘What Charles Dickens did for Childhood: His Work in Education’, *Century Magazine*, NS 35 (1898–9), 493–501: ‘When he is thoroughly understood he will be recognised as the Froebel of England’ (p. 501).
14. Rousseau, *Emile*, trans. Foley, intro. Jimack, 170–1.
15. The key figure here is George Combe, whose *The Constitution of Man* was first published in 1828 and went on to become, it was claimed, the third most widely read book in England, after the Bible and *Pilgrim’s Progress*. Dickens’s familiarity with phrenology, however, would have come primarily from his friendship with John Elliotson, a staunch supporter of the theories of Franz Joseph Gall (the founder of phrenology), who stayed with him at Lausanne whilst he was writing *Dombey and Son*. Dickens possessed Elliotson’s *Human Physiology* (5th edn., London: Longmans, 1840), which was heavily influenced by Gall’s phrenological theory. Elliotson does take care to stress that no amount of exercise will enable an individual to ‘augment the growth beyond its natural bounds in him’, and in excess it can lead to inflammatory irritation or diseased growth (p. 997).
16. William Buchan, *Advice to Mothers, on the Subject of their own Health; and the Means of Promoting the Health, Strength and Beauty of their Offspring* (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1803), 274, 284–6.
17. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile*, p. 54.

18. Karl Marx, *Capital*, 3 vols. (1867–94; repr. New York: Vintage, 1981), i. 918; quoted in Suvendrini Perera, 'Wholesale, Retail and for Exportation: Empire and the Family Business in *Dombey and Son*', *Victorian Studies*, 33 (1990), 603–20 at 606 n. 8.
19. Nathaniel Ward (1791–1868) had invented the tightly sealed case which maintained internal atmospheric conditions in the mid-1830s. It transformed the international possibilities of plant collection, and was successfully used by Joseph Hooker on his voyages with Captain James Ross from 1839 to 1843. In 1842 Ward published *On the Growth of Plants in Closely Glazed Cases*, which was to lead to the popular craze for growing ferns and other exotic plants, bringing the glasshouse into the drawing room.
20. Dickens leaves the question of the cargoes actually carried by *Dombey and Son* ships deliberately open. There is also no suggestion that the company is moving into steam power, which would further intensify the effects of the global hothouse. Thus in 1860 an economic survey of the port of London noted that with the coming of steam, 'there is no reason why the West Indies should not supply the London market with pine-apples, custard apples, the guava, limes, oranges, shaddocks, the forbidden fruit, cocoa-nuts, melons, &c. to an extent which would make pine-apples as cheap as pears to the English fruit-eater' (Charles Capper, *The Port and Trade of London, Historical, Statistical, Local and General* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1862), 409). At the time of writing, steam power had recently been introduced, and Dickens had been one of the first passengers to cross the Atlantic by steam on his trip to America in 1842. The introduction of steam power for cargo ships happened more gradually, however, due to lower storage capacity on the steamships and the additional costs of fuel.
21. Paxton is not, of course, a model for *Dombey*, and indeed was a figure of admiration for Dickens. Dickens did not in any way blame him for his unhappiness with the *Daily News*, and was later to acclaim his talents, both as gardener and creator of the Crystal Palace. His life and work did suggest linkages, however, between hothouse production, global trade, and the development of the railways. For Dickens's praise of Paxton see his speeches to the Gardeners' Benevolent Institution anniversary dinners in 1851 (with Paxton in the chair), and in 1852 when Dickens himself is in the chair; *The Speeches of Charles Dickens*, ed. R. H. Shepherd (London: Michael Joseph, n.d.), 136–42.
22. Dickens to Thomas Mitton, 20 Oct. 1845, repr. in *Letters*, iv. 410–11.
23. See Dickens to Joseph Paxton, 16 Jan. 1846, repr. *ibid.* 472–73, and 480 n. 3.
24. Forster's words; see John Forster, *The Life of Charles Dickens*, 2 vols. (London: Chapman and Hall, 1872–3), ii. 192.
25. See his letter to Evans, 26 Feb. 1846, repr. in *Letters*, iv. 505–7.
26. Dickens to Miss Burdett Coutts, 22 Apr. 1846, repr. *ibid.* 538–9.
27. Robert Brudenell Carter, 'On the Artificial Production of Stupidity in Schools', *Journal of Psychological Medicine*, 12 (1859), 186–209.
28. 'Beneath the watching and attentive eyes of Time—so far another Major—Paul's slumbers gradually changed' (p. 107).

29. This association has been recently foregrounded in Marina Warner's rewriting of *The Tempest* set in the West Indies, *Indigo* (London: Vintage, 1993).
30. In time, Dickens was to send virtually all his sons out to the colonies. See Nancy Henry, *George Eliot and the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 44 and 62–4. As Henry points out, this was a common practice at the time for middle-class parents who could not place their children in jobs at home. It should also be noted that many of the jobs available at home for the middle classes frequently involved placements overseas. For another perspective on the imperial context of *Dombey and Son* see Malvern van Wyk Smith, "'What the waves were always saying'; *Dombey and Son* and Textual Ripples on an African Shore', in Wendy S. Jacobson (ed.), *Dickens and the Children of Empire* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), 128–52.
31. Perera has argued that the power relations in *Dombey and Son* are laid bare in the failure to give the 'Native' speech, and in its confidence that his 'predicament is comic, and *can*, only be represented comically'. Perera, 'Empire in *Dombey and Son*', 612. Whilst it is true that the focus lies more on Major Bagstock than his silent and long-suffering servant, the 'comedy' is both harsh and disturbing and works to question fundamentally the hierarchy of power presented.
32. It would seem that a school breaking up had a more literal meaning in the Victorian times than it now carries. An article on 'Crime, Education and Insanity' notes, with approval, that when breaking up for holidays, boys would break the furniture as a 'symbol of emancipation'. *Journal of Psychological Medicine and Mental Pathology*, 5 (1852), 161–208 at 181. Clearly Dr Blimber's pupils are too downtrodden to essay any form of rebellion.
33. One of the first discussions of child suicide was an unsigned article in the *Journal of Psychological Medicine and Mental Pathology* in 1856, 'Suicide amongst Children', which drew on the work of Durand Fardel in France. Fardel focuses on two main reasons for child suicide, ill-treatment by parents and an 'evil system of education' operating on 'the instincts of oppressed feebleness' (vol. 9, pp. 296–9 at 299). For the discussions of child suicide in the 1880s, see the following chapter, 'Progress, Pressure, and Precocity'.
34. The Clarendon edition of the novel gives Dickens's number plans as an Appendix. See *Dombey and Son*, ed. Alan Horsman (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 839.
35. The divisions between the various forms of time in *Dombey and Son* have attracted considerable critical attention. Nina Auerbach, for example, contrasts the masculine, mechanical time of the railways with the organic time identified with the sea and Florence. See *Romantic Imprisonment: Women and other Glorified Outcasts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), ch. 7: 'Dickens and Dombey: A Daughter after All'. See also Michael Greenstein, 'Measuring Time in *Dombey and Son*', *Dickens Quarterly*, 9 (1992), 151–7.
36. Bradshaw's Railway Time Tables date from 1839. The *OED* gives the first educational usage of timetable as 1844.

37. Engels had included a section on the poor health, immorality, and violence of the Sheffield grinders in *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845), and Harriet Martineau in her article 'The Steel Grinders' in *Once a Week* (1860) also addresses the well-known violence of this group. See Sylvia Pybus, *'Damned Bad Place, Sheffield': An Anthology of Writings about Sheffield through the Ages* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 112–13, 134–5.
38. The first reliable chronometer, which enabled ships to determine their longitude at sea and was thus vital to Britain's naval and mercantile supremacy, was created by John Harrison in 1759. Pocket chronometers were available by the end of the 18th c., when England had become the world's centre of manufacture. Whereas France continued a tradition of individual craftsmanship, England started to introduce cottage industry methods, which were probably the source of Sol Gills's sense of being out of step with his time. While chronometers themselves were not 'old-fashioned' in the 1830s and 1840s, there were new methods of production and retail, with many watchmakers entering the market, which would have offered fierce competition for this 'old-fashioned' man.
39. Perera, 'Empire in *Dombey and Son*', 606.
40. The undifferentiated brood of the Toodles (in contrast with Rob the Grinder) seem to suggest, in a minor way, a more positive model, as against the poor children of Mrs Mac Stinger, who pass 'piebald childhoods' from repeated beatings (p. 602).

#### CHAPTER 7: PROGRESS, PRESSURE, AND PRECOCITY

1. James Crichton Browne, 'The History and Progress of Psychological Medicine: An Inaugural Address' (Royal Medicine Society, Edinburgh [1860]), 9.
2. Robert Brudenell Carter's article 'On the Artificial Production of Stupidity in Schools' was first published in the *Journal of Psychological Medicine*, 12 (1859), 186–209. It was subsequently republished in book format by E. L. Kellogg and Co. (New York and Chicago, 1890), a testimony both to its influence and the long-running nature of this educational debate. Drawing on both *Hard Times* and *Dombey and Son*, he speaks dismissively of 'Dr Grindall, the presiding genius of Blunderbore House for Young Gentlemen' (p. 41). *On the Influence of Education and Training in Preventing Diseases of the Nervous System*, 428.
3. Crichton Browne, 'Education and the Nervous System', 350, and introduction to Dr Hertel, *Overpressure in High Schools in Denmark* (London: Macmillan, 1885), p. xxv. Leonard Guthrie, *Functional Nervous Disorders in Childhood*, ch. 10, 'Mental and Educational Overstrain in Childhood', 134.
4. Carter, *On the Influence of Education and Training*, 1, 397–9. A further attack from the medical profession on educational methods came from Robert Ferguson, who raises his voice 'against that pernicious system of brainwork miscalled infantile education' which ignores the laws of development: 'It either crushes the imagination, so active in childhood, by a premature development



of the reflective faculties; or it overwhelms a faculty which requires no stimulus, by a host of artificial expedients. Hence the greater development of early madness; hence the instances of disproportionate faculties—the wayward will—the unbalanced conduct—the physical exhaustion and cramped development of the body, the result of the contention of the inharmonious and disordered powers and passions. The chapter on the early training of childhood is yet to be written . . .'. Prefatory Essay to Robert Gooch, *Gooch on Some of the Most Important Diseases Peculiar to Women; with Other Papers* (London: The New Sydenham Society, 1859).

5. Herbert Spencer, *Education: Intellectual, Moral and Physical* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1861), 31. The book is a collection of four essays published in the *Westminster Review* (1859), the *North British Review* (1854), and the *British Quarterly Review* (1858 and 1859).
6. Spencer, *Education*, 75. Pestalozzi (1746–1827) tried to create a method of teaching which could put Rousseau's theories into practice. He believed that education, in Spencer's words, 'must conform to the natural process of mental evolution' (p. 66). Spencer argued that Pestalozzi had been right in his fundamental ideas, but not in their application, where his ideas were not in line with the actual unfolding of the faculties.
7. Spencer, *Education*, 179.
8. *Ibid.* 174.
9. *Ibid.* 186.
10. Henry Maudsley, 'Sex in Mind and in Education', *Fortnightly Review*, NS 15 (1874), 468–9. For extracts from Maudsley and surrounding debates regarding female education, see *Embodied Selves: An Anthology of Psychological Texts, 1830–1890*, ed. Taylor and Shuttlesworth, 373–88.
11. Unsigned, 'Education, Ancient and Modern', *Temple Bar*, 7 (1862), 295–304.
12. Charles Kingsley, *The Water-Babies*, ed. Brian Alderson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 165, 167. *The Water-Babies* was serialized in *Macmillan's Magazine* 1862–3, and published in book form in 1863. The section on the Tomtoddlies was added by Kingsley for the book publication.
13. Kingsley, *The Water-Babies*, 166–7.
14. Andrew Combe, *The Principles of Physiology applied to the Preservation of Health, and the Improvement of Physical and Mental Education*, 4th edn. (1834: Edinburgh: Machlachlan and Stewart, 1836), 308–10. Combe was also drawing on experience in America, where he suggested the situation was much worse, and the work of Dr Amariah Brigham, *Remarks on the Influence of Mental Cultivation and Mental Excitement upon Health* (1833). The first issue of *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* (1850) published an article by Henry Mayhew, 'How to Kill Clever Children', 789–90, which drew on both the Combe and Brigham texts, reinforcing their warnings about not encouraging precocity.
15. *British Medical Journal* (1860), 581; 'Effects of Over-Teaching' (9 May 1874), 618.

16. *Brain: A Journal of Neurology*, ed. J. C. Bucknill, J. Crichton-Browne, D. Ferrier, and J. Hughlings-Jackson. T. Clifford Allbutt, 'On Brain Forcing', *Brain*, 1 (1879), 60–78 at 60–1, 77.
17. D. H. Tuke, 'Modern Life and Insanity', *Macmillan's Magazine*, 37 (1877–8), 130–40 at 137.
18. T. H. Huxley, 'Technical Education', in *Science and Education: Collected Essays*, iii (London: Macmillan, 1893), 410.
19. T. Pridgin Teale, *Hurry, Worry, and Money: The Bane of Modern Education* (Leeds: Charles Goodall; London: Simpkin and Marshall and Co., 1883), 6, 17. The book was based on his presidential address to the Health section of the Social Science Congress held at Huddersfield in Oct. 1883. Pridgin Teale drew on many other contributions to the debate, arguing that there was almost unanimous agreement in the medical profession that education, 'from the highest to the lowest, is doing injury to the health and nervous system of very many of the rising generation' (p. 11).
20. James Crichton Browne, 'Report of Dr Crichton-Browne to the Education Department upon the alleged Over-Pressure of Work in Public Elementary Schools', *Parliamentary Papers*, 15 (1884), vol. lxi, pp. 7–8.
21. *Ibid.* 9.
22. *Ibid.* 15.
23. J. G. Fitch, 'Memorandum relating to Dr Crichton-Browne's Report', *Parliamentary Papers*, 15 (1884), 56.
24. Gillian Sutherland, for example, in *Policy-Making in Elementary Education 1870–1895* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), commented that Crichton-Browne's 'high-coloured impressionism was no match for Fitch's cool analysis' and accepts that he was discredited, pp. 253–7. For a more recent discussion of the over-pressure controversy see J. Middleton, 'The Overpressure Epidemic of 1884 and the Culture of Nineteenth-Century Schooling', *History of Education*, 33 (2004), 419–35. The article places the debate in a broader context, but sees it as a phenomenon that quickly dies away.
25. See *Journal of Education: A Monthly Paper Devoted to the Interests of the Scholastic Profession*. The first article was in 1882 (4: 102–6), but from 1883 there was a close focus on the issue, see 5 (1883), 85, 258, 265, 301, 407, 417–19, and 6 (1884), 301–4, 391–2, 425–6, 469–70. The coverage continued for the next few years, but at a lower intensity. The journal cited some critical responses, but on the whole was largely supportive of Crichton-Browne's stance. An editorial on 1 Oct. 1884 gave an excellent summary of the various responses of the newspapers, while observing that 'the professional papers, both educational and medical, take, without exception, Dr Browne's side'. The editorial itself regretted that Dr Crichton-Browne's report 'reads more like a *communiqué* to the *Pall Mall Gazette* than an official document' but nonetheless supports his overall position (pp. 391–2).
26. See e.g. James A. Newbold, 'Overstrain in Primary Schools', Paper read at the Conference on Education under Healthy Conditions in the Town Hall,

- Manchester, 14 Apr. 1885 (Manchester District Union of Elementary Teachers).
27. See *The Times*, 4 Nov. 1884, 'Over-Pressure in Elementary Schools', letter from a teacher, F. Storr, quoting from the leading French educational journal, p. 10.
  28. See *Lancet*, 11 Oct. 1884, p. 659. The editorial notes that the report was also endorsed by the Executive Council of the National Union of Elementary Teachers. The endorsement was repeated again on 22 Nov., p. 926, and two letters were subsequently printed in strong support (pp. 977–8, 1071). In her discussion, Sutherland cited a letter in *The Times* which claimed that Crichton Browne did not speak for the medical profession. The evidence, as Crichton Browne himself claimed in response, seems to point to the opposite. Even *The Times*, which had initially been on Fitch's side, seemed to reverse its position following the letter on 13 Nov. 1884 from the Secretary to the National Union of Elementary Teachers offering the support of its 13,000 members for Crichton Browne's findings (p. 7).
  29. See National Union of Elementary Teachers, *The New Code and Over Pressure in Elementary Schools, Containing the Recent Correspondence between the Education Department and the Executive of the National Union of Elementary Teachers* (London: National Union of Elementary Teachers, 1884).
  30. 'Correspondence: Elementary Education—Over-pressure and the "Mundella Code"', *National Review*, 13 (1884), 860–3 at 863. The writer refers to innumerable cases of 'broken health, fading sight, mental aberration, and even attempted suicide' caused by the cramming system driven by the Mundella Code, 'which has sacrificed the true system of education to the illogical principle of producing a certain amount of mental growth in a given time, without consideration for variety of capacity, mental or physical' (p. 861). See also Richard A. Armstrong, *The Overstrain in Education* (London: James Clarke and Co., 1883), reprinted from *Modern Review*, Apr. 1883.
  31. Extracted in National Union of Elementary Teachers, *The New Code*, 22.
  32. It seems that the Blair government's mantra, 'education, education, education', also has a historical lineage. Thus Guyau, in *Education and Heredity*, quotes Michelet: 'As Michelet truly said, the first duty of politics is education; the second, education; the third, education' (p. 186).
  33. The passage comes from a letter from Crichton Browne, read out at a meeting in Bradford to discuss over-pressure in elementary schools in Feb. 1884, prior to Crichton Browne's report. Quoted by Fitch as evidence that the report itself was therefore partisan and invalid, 'Memorandum', 55.
  34. Crichton-Browne, 'Report', 48.
  35. T. S. Clouston, *Clinical Lectures on Mental Diseases* (London: J. and A. Churchill, 1883), 526–9.
  36. T. S. Clouston, *Female Education from a Medical Point of View* (Edinburgh: Macniven and Wallace, 1882), 32.
  37. Clouston, *Clinical Lectures*, 528.

38. Clouston was, however, an eminently respectable figure, a lecturer at Edinburgh University, and Physician Superintendent of the Royal Edinburgh Asylum. He had been co-editor of the *Journal of Mental Science* from 1873 to 1881. Perhaps not surprisingly, the journal reviewed his first foray into the subject, *Female Education from a Medical Point of View*, very positively, following his suggestion that Hood's celebrated 'Song of the Shirt' could be reworked as 'The Song of the School' to produce its own version, with eight verses, concluding:

With features weary and worn,  
 With eyelids heavy and red,  
 A school girl sat by her book-laden desk,  
 Painfully grasping her head.  
 Write—write—write,  
 Without rhyme or reason or rule,  
 And still, oh the pitiful, pitiful sight!  
 Would that parent and mistress might read it aright!  
 She sang this 'Song of the School'.

Review, *Journal of Mental Science*, 29 (1883-4), 100-5 at 104.

39. Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, 'Educational Over-Pressure', *The Times*, 19 Aug. 1884, p. 2. *The Times* also ran an editorial that day in response to Garrett Anderson's letter.
40. For an overview of medical opinions on the deleterious effects of reading, see Kate Flint, *The Woman Reader, 1837-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), ch. 4.
41. Sophie Bryant, *Over-work from the Teacher's Point of View, with Special Reference to the Work in Schools for Girls: A Lecture Delivered at the College of Preceptors, Nov. 19, 1884* (London: Francis Hodgson, 1885), 4-5, 9, 21.
42. In an early intervention on the subject, W. B. Kesteven had drawn on the work of D. H. Tuke to argue that the strain placed on girls by high-pressure education was a 'frequent cause of hysterical derangement'; 'On the Early Phases of Mental Disorder', *Journal of Mental Science*, 27 (1881-2), 189-93, 353-9 at 357.
43. 'The Sacrifice of Education to Examination: A Protest', *Nineteenth Century*, 24 (1888), 617-37 at 617.
44. 'The Sacrifice of Education', II, F. Max Müller, 638-40.
45. *Ibid.*, IV, Frederic Harrison, 645-52.
46. The three defendants were not figures of cultural authority, and included M. Temple Humphrey, arguing that because he had won his position through competition, the system had worked well, but now 'our services' were being filled with 'Celtic O'Macs'; 'The Protest against Over-Examination. A Reply', III, *Nineteenth Century*, 24 (1888), 932.
47. 'The Sacrifice of Education', 618.
48. 'Boy Monsters', *All the Year Round*, 11 Jan. 1868, 103-5 at 103.
49. Alice Meynell, *The Children* (London: Bodley Head, 1897), 28-31.
50. Unsigned., 'Calculating Boys', *Boy's Own Paper*, 2 (1879), 794-5 at 794.

51. Zerah Colburn actually worked as a teacher on returning to America. He published a memoir of his life in 1833, but this did little to rescue his reputation. Reviewing it, the *New England Magazine*, 5 (1833), commented: 'On the whole, we are sorry that Zerah Colburn has published his Life. For him, we feel less respect than before we read it, and for his father, unutterable contempt' (p. 346). W. B. Carpenter drew on the case of Zerah Colburn in his discussion of what he termed 'numerical intuition', in *Principles of Mental Physiology* (London: Henry S. King, 1874), 232–5.
52. Francis Galton, *Hereditary Genius: An Inquiry into its Laws and Consequences* (London: Macmillan, 1869), and *English Men of Science* (London: Macmillan, 1874). Galton does not use the calculating boys as examples; Colburn would not fit within his model, whilst the success of Bidder's son and grandson lay within the future. Both were called George Parker Bidder; the first, Bidder's eldest son, presented a paper with him on 'The National Defences' to the Institution of Civil Engineers (1861), and went on to become a QC. His own son became a marine biologist who inherited his grandfather's gift for visualizing numbers (ODNB).
53. Leonard Guthrie, *Contributions to the Study of Precocity in Children and The History of Neurology: The Fitzpatrick Lecture on the History of Medicine at the Royal College of Physicians in the years 1907, 1908*, 3. The work was privately printed in 1921, after his death, by his nephew, Eric G. Millar.
54. Lombroso's ideas were popularized in England by Havelock Ellis. See e.g. *The Criminal* (London: Walter Scott, 1890), 211–14.
55. For a summary of the debates see Guthrie, *Contributions*, 43–8.
56. Galton offers an interesting case, since his family clearly wished to believe that he was a genius when a child. The Galton archive at University College London holds 'A notebook containing the narrative of Francis Galton's life to 1830 by his mother' (item 53). Raymond E. Fancher argues in 'Biographical Origins of Francis Galton's Psychology', *Isis*, 74 (1983), 227–33, that Galton's whole family had an investment in his precocity as a child, preserving and dating his youthful productions, and that Galton had felt in his early adult years that he was a constant disappointment to his family.
57. James Sully, 'Genius and Precocity', *Nineteenth Century*, 19 (1886), 827–48 at 847.
58. *Ibid.* 846.
59. *Ibid.* 848.
60. James Sully, 'A Learned Infant', *Cornhill Magazine*, NS 8 (1887), 48–60 at 57.
61. *Ibid.* 55.
62. James Sully, 'Babies and Science', *Cornhill Magazine*, 43 (1881), 539–54. In 'The Education of a Genius', *English Illustrated Magazine*, May 1891, pp. 316–22, Sully argues that fathers have had a more decisive influence on the moulding of great minds than mothers. He admits mothers can have influence in the early

- years, but this is primarily over the emotions and feelings, for 'few have done much to mould their intellects' (p. 317).
63. Sully, 'A Learned Infant', 56.
  64. *Ibid.* 58.
  65. [Rebecca Harding Davis], 'Blind Black Tom', *All the Year Round*, 18 Oct. 1862, pp. 126–9. The American version was entitled more simply 'Blind Tom' and carried the following epigraph: 'Only a germ in a withered flower, / That the rain will bring out—sometime'. It appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* in Nov. 1862, pp. 580–5. Dickens noted at the beginning of the article: 'We have received the following remarkable account from a valued friend in Boston, Massachusetts. It will be published in that city within a few days after its present publication in these pages.' It is possible that Dickens added 'black' to the title, liking the alliteration thus created and the heightened sense of pathos created by racial strangeness.
  66. [Davis], 'Blind Black Tom', *All the Year Round*, 126.
  67. *Ibid.* 127.
  68. *Ibid.* 127, 129.
  69. Dickens slightly alters the original here, which refers to the war, and to similar spirits 'in your own kitchen'. The effect is to broaden out the plea so that it refers not simply to black servants and slaves, but to figures such as Jo in *Bleak House*, who inhabit the back alleys of English cities.
  70. Thus Thomas Clouston argued in *The Neuroses of Development: The Morison Lectures for 1890* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd; London: Simpkin and Marshall, 1891), that mental faculties, if normal, should have a developmental relationship to each other, and not exceed normal variation, as was clearly the case with the 'American calculating marvel, Zerah Colburn'; p. 17. Colburn is here ranked with a child of 5 who tries to commit suicide, and a girl of 15 who murders her little brother so that she does not have to look after him.
  71. [Davis], 'Blind Black Tom', 129.
  72. William Hirsch, *Genius and Degeneration: A Psychological Study*, trans. from the 2nd edn. of the German work (London: William Heinemann, 1897), 167, 169.

#### CHAPTER 8: SCIENCE, SYSTEM, AND THE SEXUAL BODY

1. Gillian Beer, *Meredith: A Change of Masks. A Study of the Novels* (London: Athlone Press, 1970), 19–20, and also *The Notebooks of George Meredith*, ed. Gillian Beer and Margaret Harris (Salzburg: Universität Salzburg, 1983). See e.g. aphorisms in his Maroon notebook attributed to Sir Austin, p. 43. It is interesting to note, in the light of later highly publicized forms of 'baby diaries', that Meredith kept a section in his Red Quarto Notebook (c.1849–59), on 'My Arthur's little sayings', p. 2.
2. George Meredith, *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel: A History of Father and Son*, ed. Edward Mendelson (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1998), 16. All further references

to this edition will be given in the text. This edition uses the first edition of the text of 1859. Meredith revised the novel three times subsequently, condensing the first three chapters into one (and thus losing the detailed descriptions of The Pilgrim's Scrip and the army of women who besiege Sir Austin), and also, in the final version, the chapter describing Mrs Grandison and her system for bringing up her daughters.

3. The *OED* cites the first usage of incubator as 1857, offering a quotation from *Cottage Gardener* which turns out to be wonderfully apposite for Sir Austin's plans for domestic incubation: 'An incubator is an unprofitable machine. It is a good hatcher . . . but the chickens cannot be reared.'
4. The most detailed exploration is that of Sven-Johan Spånberg, *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel and the Traditions of Realism* (Uppsala: Uppsala University Press, 1974), esp. ch. 3. See also Neil Roberts, *Meredith and the Novel* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), ch. 1. Roberts explores the playful intertextuality of the novel in the light of Bakhtinian theory.
5. Jean Paul Friedrich Richter, *Levana; or, The Doctrine of Education*, trans. A. H. (London: George Bell and Sons, 1891), 71–72. An 1847 translation of the third edition had been reviewed widely in England, including in the *Westminster Review*, 49 (1848), 207–19, which Meredith was later to write for.
6. Spencer, *Education: Intellectual, Moral and Physical* (1861). The work brought together four periodical essays published in the 1850s, two of which Meredith would probably have read before writing the *Ordeal*. See Terry H. Grabar, "'Scientific" Education and Richard Feverel', *Victorian Studies*, 14 (1970), 129–41. Grabar sees Sir Austin's System as a patchwork of 19th-c. educational ideas. He highlights Meredith's own unconventional education at a school run by Moravian brothers in Neuwied, 1842–4, where Henry Morley was also a pupil.
7. See *The Letters of George Meredith*, ed. by C. L. Cline, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), i. 353. George Henry Lewes had also sent his sons to Hofwyl. Day's popular educational text for children, *Sandford and Merton*, was constantly reprinted during the 19th c. Meredith was to use *Sandford and Merton* as a negative model in corresponding with Robert Louis Stevenson. See *Letters*, ii. 560–61 (4 June 1878).
8. See Sir George Thomas Staunton, *Memoirs of the Chief Incidents of the Public Life of Sir G. T. Staunton* (written by himself). Printed for private circulation (London: L. Booth, 1856). Also Sir George Thomas Staunton, *Memoir of the Life and Family of Sir G. L. Staunton*. Printed for private circulation (Havant, 1823).
9. See the review in the *Critic*, 19 (2 July 1859), repr. in Ioan Williams (ed.), *Meredith: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), 63–7.
10. Herbert Spencer had published *Social Statics: or The Conditions Essential to Human Happiness Specified and the First of Them Developed* in 1851, where he had argued that in the moral as in the material world, nature's laws held sway: 'Either society has laws, or it has not. If it has not, there can be no order, no certainty, no system in its phenomena. If it has, then they are like the other laws

of the universe—sure, inflexible, ever active, and having no exceptions’ (London: Chapman, 1851), 42. George Eliot’s partner, G. H. Lewes, had published *Comte’s Philosophy of the Sciences* in 1853, the same year as Harriet Martineau’s *The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte* (an abridged translation). G. H. Lewes’s *The Biographical History of Philosophy* (London: John W. Parker and Son, 1857) concluded with a very positive vision of the scientific certainty created by Comte’s positivism, although he chose to ‘draw a veil’ over his attempts to found a religion on these principles (p. 662).

11. George Eliot, ‘The Progress of the Intellect’, *Westminster Review*, 54 (Jan. 1851), 353–68, reprinted in *Essays of George Eliot*, ed. T. Pinney (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 31.
12. Meredith relished T. H. Huxley’s battles with Owen over Darwinism (letter to William Hardman, 4 Oct. 1862, repr. in *Letters*, i. 164–5), and later vehemently defended John Tyndall’s Belfast Address, which had been accused of supporting scientific materialism. He writes to Frederick Maxse (3 Sept. 1874) that it had roused the clergy: ‘They warned away from science? They excluded from the chief works of God and told to confine themselves to the field of the emotions! They affirm that Tyndall is an atheist, and would dare to say he is already damned if the age were in a mood to hear that language. The man or the country that fights priestcraft and priests is to my mind striking deeper for freedom than can be struck anywhere at present. I foresee a perilous struggle with them’ (see *Letters*, ii. 493).
13. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile*, trans. Foxley, intro. Jimack, 58. All further references to this edition will be given in the text.
14. The alternate name for the shaddock was ‘the forbidden fruit’. Named after the 17th-c. Captain Shaddock who had left the seeds in Barbados on his return to England, it was a form of citrus fruit, larger than a grapefruit. Scholars had decided that it was this fruit which had tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden.
15. To Samuel Lucas, 7 July 1859. See *Letters*, i. 39–40.
16. See Lionel Stevenson, *The Ordeal of George Meredith: A Biography* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1953), 58–9.
17. Allon White, in *The Uses of Obscurity: The Fiction of Early Modernism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), offers a superb reading of the role of shame in Meredith’s works, and, more specifically, the humiliation and self-exposure he had felt on the exhibition of Henry Wallis’s portrait of him as the dead poet Chatterton; see ch. 4, ‘Godiva to the Gossips: Meredith and the Language of Shame’.
18. Stevenson, *Ordeal of George Meredith*, 59–60.
19. J. E. D. Esquirol, *Observations on the Illusions of the Insane, and on the Medico-Legal Question of their Confinement*, trans. William Liddell (London: Renshaw and Rush, 1833), 82.
20. Jeremy Bentham, *Panopticon; or, The Inspection-House* (1791) in *Works*, iv (Edinburgh: William Tait, and London: Simpkin Marshall, 1843); Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London:



- Penguin, 1987), Part 3, ch. 3, 'Panopticism', pp. 195–230; p. 138. In line with Sir Austin's experimental aims, Foucault notes that the Panopticon was not merely a system of observation, it was also 'a laboratory; it could be used as a machine to carry out experiments, to alter behaviour, to train or correct individuals' (p. 203).
21. Rousseau argues that 'the most dangerous period in human life lies between birth and the age of twelve'. Early education, therefore, 'should be merely negative. It consists, not in teaching virtue or truth, but in preserving the heart from vice and from the spirit of error' (p. 57).
  22. Lallemand, *A Practical Treatise on the Causes, Symptoms, and Treatment of Spermatorrhoea*.
  23. Sven-Johan Spånberg, 'The Theme of Sexuality in *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*', *Studia Neophilologica*, 46 (1974), 202–24 at 210; William Acton, *The Functions and Disorders of the Reproductive Organs in Youth, in Adult Age, and in Advanced Life: Considered in their Physiological, Social and Psychological Relations*, 4th edn. (London: John Churchill, 1857).
  24. These advertisements were syndicated across the country, appearing in small town newspapers. The examples are taken from the *Leeds Intelligencer*, where 1848 seems to mark the beginning of heavy marketing of medical pamphlets aimed specifically at masturbation.
  25. Howe, 'On the Causes of Idiocy', 389–91.
  26. Acton, *Reproductive Organs*, 4th edn. (1865), 20. The claims about the corrupting effects of school were not new and had been applied to both sexes. Thus the popular pamphlet *Hygeniana: A Non-Medical Analysis of the Complaints Incidental to Females* by Goss and Company (20th edn., 1829), had argued that 'self-pollution' was the 'fashionable vice of young women'. They were first seduced by 'depraved servant women' and then carried the 'blasting infection' to boarding school (p. 66).
  27. R. and L. Perry and Co., *The Silent Friend: A Practical Work, Treating on the Anatomy and Physiology of the Organs of Generation, and their Diseases, with Observations on Onanism and its Baneful Results. Including Mental and Sexual Incapacity and Impotence, and on the Venereal and Syphilitic Maladies. . . . Concluding with General Observations on Marriage and its Impediments, from the Evil Consequences Arising from Early Abuse and Syphilitic Infection* (London: no publ., 1854), 68.
  28. For exploration of these themes see Mangham, *Violent Women and Sensation Fiction*, particularly the analysis of Mrs Henry Wood's *The Shadow of Ashlydyat* (1864), 149–57.
  29. Acton, *Reproductive Organs*, 18–19. See Spånberg, 'The Theme of Sexuality', 212.
  30. Meredith himself was clearly attached to the expression since he repeats it in chapter 15: 'Ripton did not receive a second invitation to Raynham, and Richard had no special intimate of his own age to rub his excessive vitality against' (p. 105).
  31. George Meredith, *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel: A History of Father and Son* (Memorial edition; London: Constable and Company, 1909), 11. Meredith is

here writing in hindsight with reference to the very public prominence given to the spread of venereal disease in the armed forces by the campaigns against the Contagious Diseases Acts from 1864. Soldiers were examined on entry into the army, but thereafter, under the misogynistic logic of the Contagious Diseases acts, it was suspected prostitutes who would be subjected to this indignity.

32. Acton, *Reproductive Organs*, 6. Acton delicately retains the Rousseau text in French. Rousseau argues that the effect was created by the fact that it was a female who first flogged him, but Acton insists that it is a reflex action of the reproductive system, independent of the sex of the person administering the punishment. Rousseau's description occurs in Book 1, 1719–23, and although he does not actually employ the term masturbation, it is clear that this is his topic: 'Who could have supposed that this childish punishment, received at the age of eight at the hands of a woman of thirty, would determine my tastes and desires, my passions, my very self for the rest of my life, and that in a sense diametrically opposed to the one in which they should normally have developed'; *The Confessions of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, trans. J. M. Cohen (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), 26.
33. Rousseau, *Confessions*, p. 30.
34. Samuel Howe's article in July 1858 'On the Causes of Idiocy', in the *Journal of Psychological Medicine and Mental Pathology*, blamed intemperance, self-abuse, and intermarriage (vol. 11, pp. 365–95). The *British Medical Journal* subsequently carried two articles on intermarriage as a cause of degeneracy of the offspring in 1861 (pp. 290–1, and 401–2) and in 1865 the *Fortnightly Review* published two linked articles by W. Adam on 'Consanguinity in Marriage', vol. 2, pp. 710–30, and vol. 3, pp. 74–88.
35. Meredith's own concern about the ill-advised nature of cousin marriage comes over strongly in a letter of May 1863 to his friend Frederick A. Maxse, which starts off with his recommendations for individual health (and how to avoid dyspepsia), before launching into an attack on royal marriages, and the 'Institution' of royalty: 'Here the Princesse Françoise marries the Duc de Chartres. First cousins! But necessity of state overbears the duties of flesh. They must marry something Royal, and what if their children howl, or hang limp, so long as the blood is kept pure?' *Letters*, i. 201–2.
36. Anthony Fletcher offers various first-person testimonies of this sudden shift from the schoolroom to womanhood for girls in *Growing up in England: The Experience of Childhood 1600–1914*, 289, 360–6.
37. T. M. Parssinen, 'Popular Science and Society: The Phrenology Movement in Early Victorian Britain', *Journal of Social History*, 8 (1974), 1–20 at 1.
38. W. Acton, *A Practical Treatise on Diseases of the Urinary and Generative Organs*, 2nd edn. (London: J. Churchill, 1851), i/2, 226. This usage is cited by the OED.
39. [G. H. Lewes] 'Hereditary Influence, Animal and Human', *Westminster Review*, 66 (1856), 135–62.
40. G. H. Lewes, one of Meredith's fellow contributors to the *Westminster Review*, was an ardent supporter of vivisection. In his two-volume *The Physiology of*

*Common Life* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1859–60), which had been previously serialized in *Blackwood's*, he had inserted a long note defending the practice: scientists, he suggests, ‘inflict pain, not for the sake of exercising power, but for the sake of gaining that scientific knowledge which is to lessen the pain of future men and women’ (ii. 36). Although the major debates about vivisection took place in the 1870s, it was already under discussion at the time Meredith was writing. The terms enter his own writing. The *OED* cites his usage in *The Tragic Comedians* (1880): ‘The vivisected youth received the caress which quickened him to wholeness at the touch.’

41. More precisely, Sir Austin is correct in his science, but only so far as it goes. As Mrs Berry points out, for Lucy to suckle in that state was to risk poisoning the child. Although medical texts strongly supported breast-feeding, they did warn that mothers should never suckle when emotionally wrought since the milk would then become a ‘draught of poison’ to the child; see Robert Ellis, *Disease in Childhood* (1852), who repeats William Carpenter’s warnings in *Manual of Physiology*, that babies who feed after the mother has been in a state of terror or rage can die suddenly of convulsive attacks: ‘it does not seem unlikely that in these cases the bland nutritious fluid should be converted into a poison of rapid and deadly operation’ (p. 134). Meredith himself was deeply preoccupied with issues of breast-feeding and exchanged letters with his friend Frederick Maxse on the subject in 1866, amidst their discussions of Comte and religion, and child upbringing; see *Letters*, ii. 327, 333, 345, 347.

#### CHAPTER 9: CHILDHOOD IN POST-DARWINIAN PSYCHIATRY

1. Maudsley, *The Physiology and Pathology of the Mind*, 269.
2. *Ibid.* 272.
3. *Ibid.* 271.
4. *Ibid.* 282.
5. *Ibid.* 282–3. Maudsley is here reworking the opening of Esquirol’s *Mental Maladies*, where he describes life in an asylum: ‘man there displays himself in all his nakedness; dissimulating not his thoughts, nor concealing his defects’ (p. 19).
6. *Ibid.* 284.
7. *Ibid.* 290–2.
8. Ellis, *The Criminal* (1890), 211. Cesare Lombroso published his *L'uomo delinquente* in 1876.
9. Ellis, *The Criminal*, 211.
10. Charles West, *On Some Disorders of the Nervous System in Childhood: Being the Lumleian Lectures Delivered at the Royal College of Physicians of London* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1871), 116–17.
11. *Ibid.* 131–4. West’s book was positively reviewed in the *Journal of Mental Science*, 17 (1871), 271–6, shortly before Maudsley’s Presidential address was

published in which he looked, 'in the light of Darwin', at evolution and degeneration of mind, and concluded that if there were any hope for diminishing crime, madness, and insanity, it lay not with religion but 'a scientific study of human nature', for 'there has been more practical morality in certain scientific disciplines and their applications than in half its creeds' ('Insanity and its Treatment', *Journal of Mental Science*, 17 (1871), 311–25 at 325).

12. Although many of these terms are distasteful to us today, I follow historical usage since my concern lies with the forms of representation in the period. I have explored medical and literary representations of idiocy at this period in more detail in 'So Childish and So Dreadfully Un-Childlike: Cultural Constructions of Idiocy in the Mid-Nineteenth Century', in Julie Scanlon and Amy Waste (eds.), *Crossing Boundaries: Thinking through Literature* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 17–44. For the medical background see Jonathan Andrews, 'Begging the Question of Idiocy: The Definition and Socio-Cultural Meaning of Idiocy in Early Modern Britain', Parts I and II, *History of Psychiatry*, 9 (1998), 65–95, 179–200, and David Wright, 'Family Strategies and the Institutional Confinement of "Idiot" Children in Victorian England', *Journal of Social History*, 23 (1998), 190–208, and *Mental Disability in Victorian England: The Earlswood Asylum, 1847–1901* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001).
13. Dickens, *American Notes*, ch. 3, p. 47.
14. Samuel Gaskell, 'Visit to the Bicêtre', 'Education of Idiots at the Bicêtre', 105.
15. Charles Dickens, 'Idiots', *Household Words*, 7 (4 June 1853), 313–17; Harriet Martineau, 'Deaf Mutes', *Household Words*, 9 (25 Mar. 1854), 134–8, 'Idiots Again', *Household Words*, 9 (15 Apr. 1854), 197–200 ('Idiots Again', p. 200).
16. Natalie McKnight, *Idiots, Madmen, and Other Prisoners in Dickens* (London: St Martin's Press, 1993).
17. Martineau, 'Deaf Mutes', 136.
18. Henry Maudsley, *Body and Mind: An Inquiry into their Connection and Mutual Influence, Specially in Reference to Mental Disorders, Being the Gulstonian Lectures for 1870* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1870), 44–5.
19. *Ibid.* 52.
20. *Ibid.* 53.
21. J. Langdon Down, *On Some of the Mental Affections of Childhood and Youth, Being the Lettsomian Lectures delivered before the Medical Society of London in 1887 Together with Other Papers* (London: J. and A. Churchill, 1887), 7. Langdon Down had first delivered a paper on this subject in 1866 for the *London Hospital Reports*. A short extract was given in the *Journal of Mental Science*, 13 (1867), 'Observations on an Ethnic Classification of Idiots', 121–3, together with an account of another Langdon Down paper, 'Marriages of Consanguinity in Relation to Degeneration of Race', 120–1 in which he questioned Howe's findings with regard to consanguinity as a cause of idiocy. Langdon Down was medical superintendent of Earlswood Asylum for Idiots from 1858 to 1868, when he established a private home for the mentally handicapped at Normansfield.

22. Langdon Down, *On Some of the Mental Affections*, 21.
23. *Ibid.* 93.
24. *Ibid.* 94.
25. For analysis of the ways in which such oppositions functioned in Victorian culture see Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (London: Methuen, 1986).
26. He offers brief overviews of two of the major continental works in the field, Moreau de Tours, *La Folie chez les enfants* (1888) (which was reviewed somewhat negatively in the *Journal of Mental Science*, 34 (1888–9), 582–3, and then again, more positively, by Clifford Allbutt in vol. 37 (1891), 264–5), and also H. Emminghaus, *Die psychischen Störungen des Kindesalters* (1887).
27. William W. Ireland, *The Mental Affections of Children: Idiocy, Imbecility and Insanity* (London: J. and A. Churchill, 1898), 272–3.
28. For details and perceptive accounts of these and other cases see Michael Newton, *Savage Girls and Wild Boys: A History of Feral Children* (London: Faber and Faber, 2002). Julia Douthwaite offers an excellent analysis of the role of the wild child in Enlightenment and Romantic culture in *The Wild Girl, Natural Man and the Monster*.
29. Victor, the Wild Boy of Aveyron, was found in 1799 and given into the care of Jean Marc Gaspard Itard, chief physician at the Institution Imperiale des Sourds-Muets in Paris. Itard's accounts of his attempts to educate Victor, published in 1801 and 1807, made him famous throughout Europe, and were influential for Maria Montessori in the framing of her educational methods at the end of the 19th c. Itard's reports are reprinted in Lucien Malson, *Wolf Children* (London: NLB, 1972).
30. Gillian Beer offers a fascinating essay on popular interest in the 'missing link' in the 19th c., which is interwoven with reflections on the practice of interdisciplinarity in 'Forging the Missing Link: Interdisciplinary Stories', in *Open Fields: Science in Cultural Encounter* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).
31. Maudsley, *Body and Mind*, 47.
32. Ireland, *The Mental Affections of Children*, ch. 22 'Wolf Boys', p. 432. Ireland had earlier published on this issue with 'An Inquiry into Some Accounts of Children Being Fostered by Wild Beasts' in *Journal of Mental Science*, 20 (1874), 185–200. Not surprisingly, anthropology was also deeply interested in the figure of the wild child. In addition to his own researches in India, Ireland drew on the paper by Edward Burnet Tylor, 'Wild Men and Beast Children', in the first issue of the *Anthropological Review* (1863), 21–32.
33. Freud, 'Infantile Sexuality', in *A Case of Hysteria, Three Essays on Sexuality and Other Works* (The Standard Edition), vii, 173–6.
34. James Sully, introduction to Perez, *The First Three Years of Childhood*, p. vi.
35. Sully, *Studies of Childhood*, 231.
36. Crichton Browne, 'Psychical Diseases of Early Life', 308.
37. Maudsley, *Physiology and Pathology*, 284.

38. Ibid. 285. See also Savage, 'Moral Insanity', who also traces sexual precocity in the morally insane child (p. 150).
39. Maudsley, *Physiology and Pathology*, 285.
40. J. Braxton Hicks, 'The Croonian Lectures on the Difference between the Sexes in Regard to the Aspect and Treatment of Disease', Lecture 1, *British Medical Journal*, 24 Mar. 1877, p. 348.
41. Acton, *The Functions and Disorders of the Reproductive Organs*, 1.
42. Lallemand, *A Practical Treatise on the Causes, Symptoms, and Treatment of Spermatorrhoea*. First published in France, 1836–42.
43. Acton, *The Functions and Disorders*, 14.
44. Ibid. 11.
45. Ibid. 18–19.
46. Ibid. 12.
47. The exchange starts with a letter from Dr Pusey, headed 'Dr Pusey on Confession', on 14 Nov. 1866 and continues until the end of December. The quotation is from his letter of 11 Dec. 1866, p. 4.
48. E. B. Pusey, 'Dr Pusey on Confession', *The Times*, 15 Dec. 1866, p. 12.
49. Editorial, *The Times*, 20 Dec. 1866, p. 7.
50. Ibid.
51. In his comprehensive study, *Solitary Sex*, Thomas Laqueur notes that Tissot had argued that both sexes suffered equally from the complaint, but the consequences were worse for women. This argument was repeated in varying forms during the 19th c., including the claim that female consumption was a result of masturbation (see ch. 4).
52. Thomas Laycock, *A Treatise on the Nervous Diseases of Women: Comprising an Inquiry into the Nature, Causes, and Treatment of Spinal and Hysterical Disorders* (London: Longman, Orme, Green and Longmans, 1840), 141.
53. 'Woman in her Psychological Relations', *Journal of Psychological Medicine and Mental Pathology*, 4 (1851), 8–51 at 38.
54. Ritchie, *An Inquiry into a Frequent Cause of Insanity in Young Men*, 24.
55. Yonge, *Womankind*, 32.
56. Gordon Stables, *The Boy's Own Book of Health and Strength* (London: Jarrold and Sons, 1892). Stables, who was a doctor and writer of boys' adventure stories, had been a stalwart contributor of advice columns to the *Boy's Own Paper*. He was also a contributor to a range of youth and domestic magazines including *The Young Man*, *The Home Messenger*, and *Young England*. He was also the author of the *The Girl's Book of Health and Beauty*.
57. Acton, *The Functions and Disorders*, 3.
58. Ibid. 1.
59. Ibid. 3.
60. Ibid. 4.
61. Yonge, *Womankind*, 9.

62. There is a growing literature on adult sexual fantasies relating to children in the Victorian period, focusing on figures such as Lewis Carroll and Ruskin, but also more broadly. James R. Kincaid's two works, *Child-Loving: The Erotic Child and Victorian Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1992), and *Erotic Innocence: The Culture of Child Molesting* (Durham, NC., Duke University Press, 1998), are at the extreme end of sexualized interpretations. Catherine Robson in *Men in Wonderland: the Lost Girlhood of the Victorian Gentleman* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), offers a more measured view of the reasons for the adult male's fascination with the female child. In his two works on Victorian sexuality, *The Making of Victorian Sexuality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), and *The Making of Victorian Sexual Attitudes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), Michael Mason has surprisingly little on childhood sexuality, although the latter book ends with an epilogue on women and children where he endorses the chemical castration of adult paedophiles and calls for a restoration of Victorian anti-sensualist attitudes. Peter Gay's first two volumes of *The Bourgeois Experience: Victoria to Freud, Education of the Senses* (I) and *The Tender Passion* (II) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984, 1986) also have very little on childhood sexuality, either in its own terms or in light of adult fantasies.
63. J. M. Barrie, *Sentimental Tommy: The Story of his Boyhood* (London: Cassell, 1896).
64. For example, in Agnes Maitland's story for the *English Illustrated Magazine*, 'Lil: A Liverpool Child', a group of street children are described in the following terms: 'There was a startling precocity—nay, rather a look of age—on some of the young faces; one or two were dully sullen, others half cunning and half bold' (1888), 564–71, 628–35 at 564. In his memoir, *Father and Son*, Edmund Gosse recalls his enforced friendship with a working-class boy: 'As is natural among the children of the poor, George was precocious where I was infantile, and undeveloped where I was elaborate. Our minds could hardly find a point at which to touch. He gave me, however, under cross-examination, interesting hints about rural matters, and I liked him' (ed. Peter Abbs, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983), 203. That education in 'rural matters' suggests that George's precocity lay at least partly in his acquisition of knowledge about sexual reproduction.
65. Henry Maudsley, 'On Some of the Causes of Insanity', *Journal of Mental Science*, 12 (1867), 488–502 at 492, 500; id., 'Illustrations of a Variety of Insanity', 161.
66. Opinion was divided as to whether masturbation could be a direct cause of insanity, as in Robert P. Ritchie's *An Inquiry into a Frequent Cause of Insanity in Young Men*, or merely a symptom.
67. Maudsley, 'Illustrations of a Variety of Insanity', 153–4.
68. T. S. Clouston, 'Puberty and Adolescence Medico-Psychologically Considered', 5–17. Clouston was influenced by David Skae, Physician-Superintendent of the Royal Edinburgh Asylum, who had created the category of 'insanity of pubescence'. Following Skae's death, Clouston edited, for publication in the *Journal of*

*Mental Science*, Skae's 'The Morisonian Lectures on Insanity for 1873'. Clouston both endorsed his theories and added in his own category of Hereditary Insanity of Adolescence (*Journal of Mental Science*, 19 (1873), 340; 20 (1874), 496, and 21 (1875), 188–207). Skae had also proposed categories of insanity of masturbation, hysterical insanity, choreic insanity, epileptic insanity, and post-connubial insanity. James Crichton Browne was less than convinced, publishing a critique in Oct. 1875 describing Skae's classificatory system as 'philosophically unsound, scientifically inaccurate, and practically useless' (21, p. 341). Clouston permitted himself a reply in Jan. 1876, 'Skae's Classification of Mental Diseases', in which he strongly defended Skae against Crichton Browne's critique (21, 532–50). Clouston developed his discussions of adolescence in later works, *Clinical Lectures on Mental Diseases* (1883), *The Neuroses of Development: The Morison Lectures for 1890* (1891), and *The Hygiene of Mind* (1906).

69. The latest edition of the *OED* gives the following definition: 'The process of growing up; the growing age of human beings; the period which extends from childhood to manhood or womanhood; youth, ordinarily considered as extending from 14 to 25 in males, and from 12 to 21 in females.'
70. T. S. Clouston, *Science and Self-Control: A Lecture to the Students of the Edinburgh University, 1886* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University, 1886), 13.
71. Clouston, 'Puberty and Adolescence', 12, quoting James Matthews Duncan, *Fecundity, Fertility, Sterility and Allied Topics*, 2nd edn. (Edinburgh, 1871), 33.
72. Clouston, 'Puberty and Adolescence', 13.
73. *Ibid.* 14. Clouston reused this material, making additions each time over the course of two decades. In *The Hygiene of Mind* (1906; 4th edn., London: Methuen, 1907), he also draws on *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* to illustrate the characteristics of adolescence (p. 160).
74. Clouston, 'Puberty and Adolescence', 14–16.
75. George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, ed. Barbara Hardy (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), 94, 53, 321, 91, 669.
76. *Ibid.* 53.
77. See Crichton Browne, 'Psychical Diseases', 309–10. The main case cited is that of Thomas Pepper, which became one of the staples of literature on child insanity at this period.
78. Maudsley, *Physiology and Pathology*, 284.
79. Clouston, *Clinical Lectures on Mental Diseases*, 528.
80. Maudsley, *Body and Mind*, p. 75.
81. Robert Brudenell Carter, *On the Influence of Education and Training in Preventing Diseases of the Nervous System* (London: John Churchill, 1855), 194. Carter is perhaps better known now for his earlier work, *On the Pathology and Treatment of Hysteria* (1853).
82. Clouston, *Female Education from a Medical Point of View*, 23, 28.
83. T. S. Clouston, *The Neuroses of Development: The Morison Lectures for 1890* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd; London: Simpkin, Marshall, 1891), 109.



84. Clouston, *Clinical Lectures*, 529.
85. Clouston, *Neuroses of Development*, 21–2.
86. K. Codell Carter, in ‘Infantile Hysteria and Infantile Sexuality in Late Nineteenth-Century German Language Medical Literature’, *Medical History*, 27 (1983), 186–96, finds a similar situation in Germany. He argues that ‘Neither infantile hysteria nor infantile sexuality was discussed or even regularly reported prior to about 1850; both phenomena were discussed frequently only beginning about 1875’ (p. 189). The claim is fundamentally correct, but needs more refining to take full account of the place of masturbation in thinking about child sexuality.
87. ‘Insanity in Children’, *Lancet*, March 23, 1889, 581, 639–40.
88. ‘Quarterly meeting of the Medico-Psychological Association, 14 March at the Retreat, York’, *Journal of Mental Science*, 35 (1889), 129–33. T. S. Clouston, the President at that point, was in the chair. Discussants included Drs Clouston, Fletcher Beach, Savage, Yellowlees, and Baker. The legacy of George Savage extended well into the 20th c. Whilst Clouston drew on Victorian literature to construct his medical categories, Savage applied his theories to Virginia Woolf, whom he treated after her breakdowns, thus exerting a negative influence on the course of modernist literature. He had also earlier treated her cousin Jem, who died in an asylum at the age of 33. See Hermione Lee, *Virginia Woolf* (London: Vintage, 1997), ch. 10 and *passim*.
89. D. Hack Tuke, *A Dictionary of Psychological Medicine*, 2 vols. (London: Churchill, 1892): Allbutt, pp. 202–4; Clouston, pp. 357–71; Donkin, pp. 618–27; J. M. Charcot and Pierre Maire, pp. 627–41. In his entry on Hysteria, H. B. Donkin notes: ‘The records of a hospital for children might furnish material for a sensational chapter on nervous disorders’ (p. 624). Charcot, who focused more on ‘Hystero-Epilepsy’, suggested that while it could present at any age, it mostly occurred in puberty and adulthood. Other relevant entries included ‘Precocity’, ii. 993, and ‘Prevention of Insanity’, 996–1002, and George Savage on ‘Suicide and Insanity’, ii. 1230–2. The *Dictionary* also included a range of entries from the emerging discipline of developmental psychology, with three from Francis Warner and another from Louis Robinson (see Chapter 14).
90. Maudsley, *The Pathology of Mind*, 387.
91. *Ibid.* 393.
92. *Ibid.* 392.
93. *Ibid.* 383.
94. *Ibid.* 399.
95. *Ibid.* 389.
96. Hall, *Adolescence*, ii. 109, 121, 123. Although Hall’s book was not published until 1904, he had been publishing articles in the area since the early 1890s, many of which were incorporated into his major work. Hall’s writing at this point is the most extraordinary mixture of pseudo-lyricism and scientism. He wishes, even more than Freud, to represent sexuality in a positive light, but the resulting

language is stunning in its unreadable absurdity: 'Every gemmule is mobilized and the sacred hour of heredity normally comes when adolescence is complete in wedlock and the cerebro-spinal system rings up the sympathetic system, and hands over the reins to the biophores and germ cells, which now assert their dominance over those of the soma. In the most unitary of all acts, which is the epitome and pleroma of life, we have the most intense of all affirmations of the will to live and realize that the only true God is love, and the center of life is worship' (ii. 122–3).

97. *Ibid.*, i, p. xiii.
98. *Ibid.* p. xiv.
99. *Ibid.* 266. Hall also later cites an 1892 article by Freud in which he argues that 'all forms of morbid anxiety were closely associated with the *vita sexualis*, and always arose in cases of retention of the *libido*. This might occur in adolescents and was common where sexuality was excessively or abnormally frustrated or restrained' (i. 285).
100. *Ibid.* 536–7. Hall offers an entire chapter, pp. 513–89, on what he terms 'ephebic' literature.
101. The opening sentence of *The Mill on the Floss* captures, in its depiction of the checked course of the river Floss, the entire plot of the novel: 'A wide plain, where the broadening Floss hurries on between its green banks to the sea, and the loving tide, rushing to meet it, checks its passage with an impetuous embrace.'
102. Hall, *Adolescence*, i. 493, 511–12.
103. *Ibid.* 480. The source is Ellis's chapter on 'Sexual Periodicity' in his *Psychology of Sex* (1900).
104. Hall, *Adolescence*, ii. 635, 637, 640.
105. *Ibid.* 647.
106. *Ibid.* 649.
107. *Ibid.* 748. He attributes this argument to Galton and Grant Allen, although the image itself was one that was first used by Clouston to express his opposition to female education. See *Clinical Lectures*: 'if the education of civilised young women should become what some educationalists would wish to make it, all the brain energy would be used up in cramming a knowledge of the sciences, and there would be none left at all for trophic and reproductive purposes. In fact, for the continuance of the race there would be needed an incursion into lands where educational theories were unknown, and where another rape of the Sabines was possible' (p. 528).
108. Clouston, *Neuroses of Development*, 129.

#### CHAPTER 10: CHILDHOOD, SEXUALITY, AND THE NOVEL

1. Juliana Horatia Ewing, *Six to Sixteen: A Story for Girls* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, n.d.), 124.
2. In her book, *The Awkward Age in Women's Popular Fiction, 1850–1900: Girls and the Transition to Womanhood* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), Sarah Bilston

notes the usage in Ewing's story (p. 1), but rather surprisingly does not look at the story itself. Whilst the book does not deal in any depth with medical debates, it is a helpful guide to a wide range of literary texts, making a strong claim that, contrary to Carol Dyhouse's earlier assertion in *Girls Growing up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), the ages between 15 and 19 were seen in the Victorian period as a transitional phase.

3. Ewing, *Six to Sixteen*, 107, 122–4.
4. *Ibid.* 167.
5. *Ibid.* 128.
6. *Ibid.* 129.
7. *Ibid.* 133. It is unclear whether Ewing had a specific magazine in mind here in her mockery of these letter columns. Annoyingly, the most obvious candidate, *The Milliner and Dressmaker and Warehouseman's Gazette*, which started in 1870, has rather tame correspondence columns which focus on fashion, and not the wayward behaviour of young girls.
8. Dinah Mulock Craik, 'In her Teens', *Macmillan's Magazine*, 10 (1864), 219–23 at 220.
9. Ewing, *Six to Sixteen*, 134.
10. Clouston, *Clinical Lectures*, 529.
11. Ewing, *Six to Sixteen*, 144–5.
12. Charlotte Brontë, *Villette*, ed. Tony Tanner (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), 135–6.
13. Sarah Grand, *The Beth Book*, 238.
14. *Ibid.* 233.
15. *Ibid.* 234.
16. W. T. Stead had published his four articles on child prostitution in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, July 1885. The horrific details included a child of 13 being bought for £5. For a critical perspective on this campaign see Deborah Gorham, 'The "Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon" Re-examined: Child Prostitution and the Idea of Childhood in Late-Victorian England', *Victorian Studies*, 21 (1978), 353–79. She suggests that previous historians have been complicit with the moral-purity movement ideals of the Victorian era, and have not questioned the impulse to control adolescent sexuality, or noted the ways in which sexuality was separated out from a more widespread exploitation of young girls and women.
17. Grand, *The Beth Book*, 235.
18. *Ibid.* 249–50.
19. One of the first Freudian readings of the tale was that of Edmund Wilson in 'The Ambiguity of Henry James', *Hound and Horn*, 7 (1934), 385–406. Christine Brooke-Rose offers an interesting dissection of various Freudian readings in 'The Squirm of the True: An Essay in Non-Methodology', *PTL: A Journal for Descriptive Poetics and Theory of Literature*, 1 (1976), 265–94.
20. Acton, *Reproductive Organs*, 20.
21. Henry James, *The Tum of the Screw and other Stories*, ed. T. J. Lustig (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 130. All further references will be given in the text.

22. Crichton Browne, 'Psychical Diseases of Early Life', 308.
23. See Esquirol's depiction of erotomania in *Mental Maladies*, 335–42. The sufferers do not pass the limits of propriety but conceive a secret passion and 'vow a pure, and often secret devotion to the object of their love' (p. 336).
24. In *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, John Locke had warned of the dangers posed by servants. Children 'frequently learn from unbred or debauch'd servants such language, untowardly tricks and vices, as otherwise they possibly would be ignorant of all their lives', sect. 68–9, pp. 126–7. By the 19th c. such warnings had become sexually explicit. Thus Perez argued, with reference to the arousal of the sexual instinct, that parents should guard against unprincipled nurses; Bernard Perez, *The First Three Years of Childhood*, 58. Freud was to argue that he himself had been seduced by his nurse at the age of 2; see Lloyd DeMause, 'The Evolution of Childhood', in id. (ed.), *The History of Childhood* (London: Souvenir Press, 1976), 49. DeMause suggests that the idea that servants sexually abused their charges stretches back to medieval times.
25. The governess gives expression to her own fears, as she suggests to Mrs Grose, that Miles had offended by calling her a menial, like Peter Quint (p. 165).
26. James had, for example, read his brother William's paper on the medium Mrs Piper to the Society for Psychical Research's meeting in Oct. 1890. The impact of ideas of the supernatural on James's fiction has received extensive critical attention; see e.g. Martha Banta, *Henry James and the Occult: The Great Extension* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972); Peter G. Beider, *Ghosts, Demons, and Henry James: 'The Turn of the Screw' at the Turn of the Century* (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 1989), and Elizabeth Wadge, 'Psychical Research: A Possible Source for "The Turn of the Screw"', *Notes and Queries*, 48 (2001), 162–4.
27. The reference, which comes from Lamb's essay 'Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago', was identified by Anthony Curtis in his edition of the tale: *The Aspern Papers and The Turn of the Screw* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), 269. The essay was first published in the *London Magazine*, 1820; see Charles Lamb, *Complete Works* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1887), 343. For an analysis of the sexual dimensions of child-beating in the 19th c. see Kincaid, *Erotic Innocence*.
28. On her first sighting his bottom half is concealed by the parapet (although he is very 'erect' and his hands play suggestively with the crenellations), and on the second he is seen through a window, again 'from the waist up' (pp. 137, 142).

## CHAPTER II: THE SCIENCE OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT

1. Charles Darwin, 'A Biographical Sketch of an Infant', *Mind: A Quarterly Review of Psychology and Philosophy*, 2 (1877), 285–94.
2. Dietrich Tiedemann, 'Observations on the Mental Development of a Child' (1787), reproduced in *Historical Readings in Developmental Psychology*, ed. Wayne Dennis (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1972), 11–31. A brief

overview of the history of baby diaries is given in D. B. Wallace, M. B. Franklin, and R. T. Keegan, 'The Observing Eye: A Century of Baby Diaries', *Human Development*, 37 (1994), 1–29. See also Siegfried Jaeger, 'The Origin of the Diary Method in Developmental Psychology', and Robert T. Keegan and Howard E. Gruber, 'Charles Darwin's Unpublished "Diary of an Infant": An Early Phase in his Psychological Work', in G. Eckardt, W. G. Bringmann, and L. Sprung (eds.), *Contributions to a History of Developmental Psychology: International William T. Preyer Symposium* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1985), 63–74 and 127–46.

3. The diary is reproduced in J. A. V. Chapple and Anita Wilson, *Private Voices: The Diaries of Elizabeth Gaskell and Sophia Holland* (Keele: Keele University Press, 1996). Gaskell notes that of the books she has consulted, Necker is the 'nicest'. She also refers to Combe, *Principles of Physiology Applied to the Preservation of Health, and to the Improvement of Physical and Mental Education* (1834).
4. Chapple, *Private Voices*, 52, 54, 56.
5. *Ibid.* 60.
6. The full diary is given in Chapple, *Private Voices*. Sophia Holland notes, for example, that her son at one year is showing more passion and self-will, but unlike Gaskell does not seem particularly concerned. She goes on to record his delight when he knocks down the nursery table and basins of bread and milk (pp. 91, 93).
7. Gaskell's mother, Elizabeth Holland, had been part of the 'Holland clan' who were in turn related to the Wedgwood and Darwin families. Sophia was married to Edward Holland (Gaskell's first cousin, and second cousin to Darwin).
8. Wallace et al. note in the 'The Observing Eye' that Emma Darwin's father, Josiah Wedgwood, had kept a diary of his children, from 1797 to 1799 (p. 10).
9. The full text of the original notebook is published in Appendix III, 'Darwin's Observations on his children', in *The Correspondence of Charles Darwin*, iv, 410–33 at 411.
10. *Ibid.* 410.
11. Adolf Kussmaul, *Untersuchungen über das Seelenleben des neugeborenen Menschen* (Leipzig and Heidelberg, 1859). Lewes's heavily annotated copy of Kussmaul's tract is amongst his books at Dr Williams's Library, London.
12. The Kussmaul tract was reviewed in the *Zeitschrift für rationnelle Medicin* (Leipzig and Heidelberg, 1861), 516–17, which is also among G. H. Lewes's books at Dr Williams's Library.
13. The *Lancet* for example, usually classified any work on babies under the heading 'infant', apart from the emotive issue of 'baby-farming', where it used the more popular term in its long-running campaign against such abuses in order to play upon popular sentiment.
14. [G. H. Lewes], 'The Mental Condition of Babies', *Cornhill Magazine*, 7 (1863), 649–56 at 651.
15. *Ibid.* 651.

16. Lewes, *The Physiology of Common Life*, ii. 239–43. For summaries of Lewes's papers see *Report of the Twenty-Ninth Meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science* (London: John Murray, 1860), 166–70. There were replies in the *Athenaeum* on 24 Sept. and 8 Oct. 1859, pp. 407 and 471.
17. The idea of newborn deafness did not, however, originate with Kussmaul. In his notes on the Kussmaul text, Lewes marks out a quotation from Xavier Bichat's *Recherches physiologiques sur la vie et la mort* where he notes deficiencies in all the newborn's senses, including the fact that 'leur oreille n'entend presque rien' (p. 10).
18. Lewes, 'Mental Condition', 654.
19. Frances Power Cobbe and George Eliot's friend Cara Bray were leading lights of the anti-vivisection movement, which led to the passing of the Cruelty to Animals Act in 1876. For Lewes's involvement on the opposing side see Rosemary Ashton, *G. H. Lewes: A Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 268.
20. Lewes, 'Mental Condition', 654.
21. Lewes quotes extensively, with manifest approval, from Wordsworth's 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood' (1802–4, 1807).
22. For an interesting history of Darwin's difficulties in acquiring these plates, and their less than scientific nature, see Phillip Prodger, 'Rejlander, Darwin, and the Evolution of "Ginx's Baby"', *History of Photography*, 23 (1999), 260–8. I am indebted to Gregory Radick for this reference.
23. Charles Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (London: John Murray, 1872), 212.
24. G. H. Lewes contributed 'What is Sensation' (pp. 157–61) and Sully a long article on Wundt, 'Physiological Psychology in Germany' (pp. 20–43), and a shorter one on 'Art and Psychology' (pp. 467–78) to *Mind*, 1 (1876).
25. H. Taine, 'On the Acquisition of Language by Children', *Mind*, 2 (1877), 252–9, translation of an article that appeared in *Revue Philosophique*, 1 (Jan. 1876).
26. Emma's contributions to the diary had started later and were more focused on the sayings and linguistic development of the children than on their physiological development. See 'Darwin's Observations on his Children', in *The Correspondence of Charles Darwin*, iv. 410–33 at 411.
27. See *Darwin Calendar of Correspondence*, ed. by Frederick Burkhardt and Sydney Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), letters 10968, 11011, 11088.
28. W. Preyer, *The Mind of the Child*, i. 98. This edition (1888–9) carried a preface by G. Stanley Hall, stating that it remains the fullest and best work on child studies, whilst also recommending his own method of 'psychogenetic study', which had now amassed 5,000–6,000 child records.
29. *Ibid.* i. 233, 301, 300.
30. For example, volume 3 (1878) carried F. Pollock's 'An Infant's Progress in Language', notes made, he observes, 'in humble following of Mr. Darwin's and M. Taine's example' (pp. 392–401 at 392) and Pollock's review of

Bernard Perez, *Les Trois premières années de l'enfant* (Paris, 1878), a work subsequently published in English in 1885 with a preface by Sully. Volume 5 (1880) contained a review by Sully of an article by Preyer in *Deutsche Rundschau* which returned to the earlier experiments of Kussmaul, reviewed by Lewes in the *Cornhill*, and repeated his assertions that 'New-born children are all deaf', pp. 385–6. Volume 6 (1881) contained 'Notes on an Infant' by F. H. Champneys, pp. 104–7, again explicitly modelling itself on Darwin's 'Sketch'. Volume 7 (1882) carried Sully's review of Preyer's *Die Seele des Kindes*, pp. 416–23.

31. Joseph Jacobs, 'The Need of a Society for Experimental Psychology', *Mind*, 11 (1886), 49–54 at 51. Interestingly, Jacobs suggests that Galton's practical researches into the contents of individuals' minds should be complemented by reading the works of George Eliot and Meredith. This suggestion follows an earlier article by Sully in 1881 on 'George Eliot's Art', pp. 378–94, which commends her work to psychologists in quest of 'scientific precision'. Although *Mind* was resolutely scientific in its orientation, it was sufficiently open-minded to grant the possibility of fiction contributing to the development of the science of psychology.
32. James Sully, Critical notice of Preyer, *Die Seele des Kindes*, in *Mind*, 7 (1882), 416–23. Sully greets the volume as 'the first systematic record of the mental development of a young child' (p. 416). He accepts without question Preyer's reiteration of Kussmaul's finding that babies are born deaf, but interestingly raises queries regarding Preyer's endorsement of Darwin's theory that fears are all inherited, preferring himself a combined explanation of shock and inherited association. In assessing Preyer's theories of language acquisition, he draws on his own scientific observations.
33. These articles preceded the more scholarly *Outlines of Psychology with Special Reference to the Theory of Education* (1884). Although this was not a detailed study of child development, as its secondary title implies, it did have an explicit focus on 'what may be called the embryology of mind' (p. vii). For a discussion of Sully's contributions to the *Cornhill* just prior to 'Babies and Science' see Ed Block, Jr. 'Evolutionist Psychology and Aesthetics: *The Cornhill Magazine*, 1875–1880', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 45 (1984), 465–75.
34. In his autobiography Sully characterized his writing for the *Cornhill* as midway 'between the more serious and the lighter kind of article'; James Sully, *My Life and Friends: A Psychologist's Memories* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1918), 163.
35. J. S. [James Sully], 'Babies and Science', *Cornhill Magazine*, 43 (1881), 539–54 at 540.
36. *Ibid.* 545.
37. In an alternative reading of the cartoon, Gillian Beer suggests that it also hints at parthogenesis and cuckoldry. See *Open Fields: Science in Cultural Encounter*, 132–3.
38. Sully, 'Babies and Science', 546.

39. As Lyubov Gurjeva notes, Sully's views on women elsewhere were decidedly liberal; 'Everyday Bourgeois Science: The Scientific Management of Children in Britain, 1880–1914' (Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge, 1998) ch. 5.
40. Sully, 'Babies and Science', 551.
41. *Baby: An Illustrated Monthly Magazine for Mothers* was started in Dec. 1887. Its primary focus was on the health care of children. Sully contributed a short article on 'Children's Fears' to the first volume (July 1888), 195–7.
42. *Studies of Childhood* (1895) drew on material from 'Babies and Science' as well as articles published in *Popular Science Monthly*, *English Illustrated Magazine*, *Longmans' Magazine*, and the *Fortnightly Review*. Its publication occurs once Sully's professional position has been assured by his appointment in 1892 to the Chair at University College London.
43. W. Tyler Smith, 'Introductory Lecture to a Course of Lectures on Obstetrics, Delivered at the Hunterian School of Medicine, 1847–48', *Lancet*, 2 (1847), 371.

#### CHAPTER 12: EXPERIMENTS ON BABIES

1. Unsigned, 'Prize Babies', *Household Words*, NS 2 (14 Aug. 1869), 249–52 at 249.
2. *Ibid.* 251.
3. Unsigned, 'A Baby Show', *Saturday Review*, 16 July 1870, pp. 78–9 at 79. The article is in response to the follow-up show held in 1870.
4. Unsigned, 'Baby Shows', *Lancet*, 24 July 1869, p. 149. For the *Lancet* coverage of baby farming, see e.g. 4 Jan. 1868, p. 18. By 1870 a full campaign was under way, with very extensive coverage. The issue is still a concern at the end of the 1870s; see e.g. *Lancet* (1879), 623, 701.
5. Francis Galton, 'Hereditary Talent and Character', *Macmillan's Magazine*, 12 (1865), 157–66, 318–27; *Hereditary Genius* (London: Macmillan, 1869).
6. Francis Galton, 'The History of Twins, as a Criterion of the Relative Powers of Nature and Nurture', *Fraser's Magazine*, 12 (1875), 566–76; revised for *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, 5 (1875), 391–406. 'Short Notes on Heredity etc.', in 'Twins' was published first in the *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, 5 (1875), 324–9, and then extracted as 'Twins and Fertility', *Live Stock Journal and Fanciers' Gazette*, 3 (1876), 148.
7. Unsigned, 'Baby Shows', *Saturday Review*, 17 July 1869, pp. 82–3 at 82.
8. The latter detail is drawn from Unsigned, 'Baby Shows', *Leisure Hour*, 1 Sept. 1870, p. 608.
9. Unsigned, 'Baby Shows', *Saturday Review*, 83.
10. Lewis Carroll, *The Annotated Alice: Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass by Lewis Carroll*, ed. Martin Gardner (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1970), 85–7. This edition gives the original illustration, but also notes that Carroll designed The Wonderland Postage-Stamp Case, which was sold in Oxford, and offered a transforming picture, so that the baby changes into a pig, and back, as the case is removed or reinserted into its envelope.



11. 'A Baby Show', *Saturday Review*, 79.
12. Unsigned, 'Baby Shows', *Lancet*, 9 Sept. 1899, p. 747.
13. See W. H. G. Armytage, 'Galton the Educationist', in *Sir Francis Galton, FRS: The Legacy of His Ideas: Proceedings of the 28th Annual Symposium of the Galton Institute, London, 1991*, ed. Milo Keynes (London: Macmillan in association with the Galton Institute, 1993), 180–8.
14. Francis Galton, *Memories of my Life* (London: Methuen, 1909), ch. 17, 'Anthropometric Laboratories', 244; id., 'The Anthropometric Laboratory', *Fortnightly Review*, 31 (1882), 332–8.
15. Such tests were still around as part of the entertainment at the annual summer fetes which formed part of my own childhood in the 1950s and 1960s.
16. *Life History Album*, ed. Francis Galton, prepared by Direction of the Collective Investigation Committee of the British Medical Association (London: Macmillan, 1884), 1. The album asks solely for records of weight and height until the age of 5, when full anthropometric measuring begins. Annual records are required until the age of 25, and thereafter at five-yearly intervals. The book has a section on apparatus required, and where to buy weighing and measuring machines. Photographs were also to form part of the history recorded by the album.
17. Galton wrote on 25 Mar. 1880: 'I have of late been envious of those who have children, and opportunities of psychologically dissecting them. Thank you very much for what you tell me about yours.' MS Sully Correspondence, University College London Special Collections, MS Add 158/1.
18. Kingsley, *The Water-Babies*, ed. Alderson, 81–93. The professor is subsequently punished; he loses his wits for three months and starts to believe in all forms of mythological creatures he had previously denied.
19. *Ibid.* 83. Whereas Owen had used the 'hippocampus minor' argument to maintain that humans were not descended from apes, the Professor adopts the reverse position. Kingsley's target here is the specious form of the argument, not the tenets of Darwin's theory of human evolution, which he was quick to accept, in his own idiosyncratic way. As Gillian Beer has argued, 'Kingsley seized on the restoration of the *wonderful* in Darwinian theory'. He revelled in the imaginative possibilities of transformation it suggested; *Darwin's Plots*, 127.
20. Sambourne took his cue from a brief exchange early on in the book when the imagined child interlocutor argues, against the narrator, that there is no evidence that water-babies exist. If one had been found 'they would have put it into spirits, or into the Illustrated News, or perhaps cut it into two halves, poor dear little thing, and sent one to Professor Owen, and one to Professor Huxley, to see what they would each say about it' (p. 39). The first edition of *The Water-Babies*, 'with one hundred illustrations by Linley Sambourne', was published in 1886 by Macmillan, twenty-three years after original publication.
21. Julian Sturgis, 'A Child of Science', *Macmillan's Magazine*, 56 (1887), 65–80 at 68.
22. *Ibid.* 70, 71, 74.
23. *Ibid.* 74.

24. Wilkie Collins, *Heart and Science: A Story of the Present Time* (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 1996), 94. All further references to this work will be given in the text.
25. The Broadview edition of the novel offers a helpful summary of the controversies and an account of Ferrier's trial from the memoirs of one of the main figures in the anti-vivisection, Frances Power Cobbe, pp. 368–9.
26. The Herod reference highlights the anti-Semitism and xenophobia which seems to lie behind the creation of Nathan Benjulia, who has a 'true gipsy-brown complexion' and 'straight black hair' which hung gracelessly like that of 'an American Indian' (p. 95).
27. Lewis Carroll was an early opponent of vivisection, publishing 'Some Popular Fallacies about Vivisection' in the *Fortnightly Review*, 23 (1875), 847–54. In a remarkably prescient conclusion, he argues that vivisection will almost certainly be extended to human subjects, starting with condemned criminals, inmates of refuges for incurables, hopeless lunatics, and pauper hospital patients. He envisages the grim spectre, gloating with scalpel in hand: 'He will tell you that this is merely a question of relative expediency,—that with so feeble a physique as yours, you have only to be thankful that natural selection has spared you so long. . . . He will smilingly assure you that the *hyperaesthesia*, which he hopes to induce, is in itself a most interesting phenomenon, deserving much patient study.' Reproduced in the Broadview text, ed. Farmer, p. 349.
28. The discussion occurs in the obituary for Collins in the *Fortnightly Review* (1889), repr. in *Heart and Science*, ed. Farmer, p. 374. Given Swinburne's notorious reputation with reference to the sexuality of his own works, it might seem unwise to take his response as in any way typical. It is echoed, however, in the *Academy* review, which praises 'the unscientific and illiterate Zoe [*sic.*]' and her father as 'capital examples of genuine and unforced humour'. A warning note is sounded, nonetheless, in the *Pall Mall Budget*, which notes that the portrait of Zo 'would have been agreeable if Mr Collins had not introduced some strokes of perfectly unnecessary coarseness in her portrait'; repr. in *Heart and Science*, ed. Farmer, pp. 330, 333.
29. See Jenny Bourne Taylor, *In the Secret Theatre of Home: Wilkie Collins, Sensation Narrative, and Nineteenth-Century Psychology* (London: Routledge, 1988), 232.

### CHAPTER 13: MONKEYS AND CHILDREN

1. The news elicits Shylock's immortal response: 'I would not have given it for a wilderness of monkeys'; Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, III. i. 124–31; Farquhar, *The Beaux Stratagem*, II. ii, as cited by *OED*.
2. Some measure of the enormous impact created by Du Chaillu's gorilla exhibitions can be gleaned from the fact that there were twenty-one articles or illustrations referring to Du Chaillu in *Punch* in 1861–2. *Punch* took comic delight in the possibilities suggested by the simian/human parallels. See *Science in the Nineteenth-Century Periodical: An Electronic Index*, v. 3.0 hriOnline,

<<http://www.sciper.org>>, accessed 23 Feb. 2008. Harriet Ritvo in *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987) offers: an excellent guide to the interface between the human and animal in the 19th c., with details on menageries and travelling exhibitions. See particularly ch. 5, 'Exotic Captives'.

3. The picture is from the *Proceedings of the Zoological Society* (1885), to accompany an article about her by the Superintendent of the Gardens, A. D. Bartlett, 'On a Female Chimpanzee now Living in the Society's Gardens', 672–5. He notes her very unusual meat-eating tendencies and her intelligence, which is 'far above that of the ordinary Chimpanzee'. He decides she is a distinct species and applies the name 'Anthropopithecus Calvus', meaning bald-headed chimpanzee (with a fascinating digression on the influence of environment, suggesting that the 'descendants of Europeans' in America 'are gradually developing the peculiarities of the original natives of that country'). Fred Miller, 'The Monkey House in the Zoo', *English Illustrated Magazine* (July 1895), 327–3 at 332.
4. Unsigned, 'Boys', *Saturday Review*, 7 Aug. 1869, pp. 180–2 at 180.
5. Unsigned, 'Childhood and its Reminiscences', *Fraser's Magazine*, 37 (1848), 261–72 at 266. Although celebrations of naughtiness are generally targeted on boys, this article is unusual in offering positive female examples of a naughty child, Constance, set against the dreary goodness of Cecilia. Her misdemeanours, however, seem to be those of imagination, and where open physical revolt is mentioned the subject is unquestionably male: 'We mean, of course, an honourable and spirited, not a mean or grovelling naughtiness,—one that will kick nurse's legs openly, not pinch a little brother secretly' (p. 265). Presumably such behaviour would not be applauded if it was the mother rather than the lower-class servant who was being kicked.
6. Frank Buckland, 'My Monkeys', *Temple Bar*, 22 (1868), 174–9 at 174, 179.
7. *Ibid.* 179.
8. For further details see George C. Bompas, *Life of Frank Buckland* (London: Smith and Elder, 1886), 36–46. Bompas was Buckland's brother-in-law.
9. Buckland wrote initially for popular family journals, *Bentley's Magazine*, *Leisure Hour*, and *Household Words*. From 1856 to 1865 he was natural history editor for *Field*, writing extensively for them before forming his own journal, *Land and Water*. His influence extended well beyond the readership of these journals since the articles were frequently reprinted in other titles or reported on. His account of Jenny in the Zoological Gardens, for example, was picked up in the *London Journal*, 1 Oct. 1869, p. 207. His papers, which covered not only monkeys but the whole gamut of animals from rats to hippopotami, and all the travelling exhibitions of curiosities, including giants, hairy ladies, and talking fish, were collected in a series of books, starting with the four volumes of *Curiosities of Natural History* (1857–65), which went through extensive reprintings until the end of the century and beyond. He was one of the first writers secured for the opening volume of the *Boy's Own Paper*, with an article on 'My Monkeys, and How I Manage Them',

1 (1879), 14–15. As Inspector of Fisheries he was also an influential figure and was largely responsible for introducing fish farming to England. One other claim to fame was his introduction of an Acclimatisation Society in England, following Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire's example in France, which continued his father's example of dining on exotic animals from the zoo. Interestingly, Kingsley had made his naturalist professor in *The Water-Babies* a member of this society: 'being a member of the Acclimatisation Society, he had come here to collect all the nasty things which he could find on the coast of England, and turn them loose around the Cannibal Islands, because they had not nasty things enough there to eat what they left' (*The Water-Babies*, 81). Consumption by naturalists or cannibals was clearly another threat hanging over Tom.

10. Francis T. Buckland, *Curiosities of Natural History: Third Series* (1865; London: Macmillan and Co., 1900), 95.
11. Frank Buckland, 'My Monkeys', *Leisure Hour* (March 1870), 155; *Curiosities of Natural History: Third Series*, pp. 96–7.
12. Buckland, 'My Monkeys, and How I Manage Them', 14.
13. Bompas, *Life of Frank Buckland*, 361–3.
14. The *Darwin Calendar of Correspondence* contains numerous letters between Buckland and Darwin between 1863 and 1870 (<[www.darwinproject.ac.uk](http://www.darwinproject.ac.uk)>). Darwin drew on Buckland for information on, for example, salmon size, in relation to that of the river, or the feet of otter-hounds.
15. Francis T. Buckland, *Notes and Jottings from Animal Life* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1882), 11.
16. Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*, 2nd edn. (London: John Murray, 1888), 619.
17. *Ibid.* 101–3.
18. *Ibid.* 111.
19. *Ibid.* 143–5.
20. Anon., 'A Clever Monkey', *London Journal*, 1 Oct. 1869, p. 207. The article offers a lengthy extract from Buckland's account of Jenny in his journal *Land and Water*.
21. Accounts of monkeys in zoos or domestic settings became a staple of late 19th–c. periodical reporting. Discussions seemed invariably to include Darwin's account of the 'heroic little monkey'. See e.g. Fred Miller, 'The Monkey House in the Zoo', which concludes with the tale (p. 334).
22. Charles Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, intro. S. J. Rachmann (London: Julian Friedmann, 1979), 137. This edition reproduces the original 1872 text.
23. For Darwin's responses to Haeckel see Gould, *Ontogeny and Phylogeny*, ch. 4.
24. Darwin, *Expression of the Emotions*, 140.
25. Darwin, *Descent*, 127, 126.
26. All Romanes's theories were thus extensively aired and discussed in the periodical press. Periodical publication often preceded the book version, so the ideas

- were circulating well beforehand. His article 'Animal Intelligence', for example, published in the *Nineteenth Century* in 1878, preceded the book by four years.
27. George J. Romanes, *Animal Intelligence* (1882; 6th edn., London: Kegan Paul, Trench Trübner and Co., 1895), 484.
  28. *Ibid.* 498.
  29. George J. Romanes, 'Origin of Human Faculty', *Brain* (Oct. 1889), repr. in *Essays*, ed. C. Lloyd Morgan (Longmans, Green and Co., 1897), 96. Romanes outlined his theories more fully in *Mental Evolution in Man: Origin of Human Faculty* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench and Co., 1888), esp. ch. 7 on 'Articulation'. For further reports on his work with Sally see 'On the Mental Faculties of Anthropopithecus Calvus', *Nature*, 13 June 1889, pp. 160–2, and *Proceedings of the Scientific Meetings of the Zoological Society of London* (1889), 316–21.
  30. Romanes, 'Origin of Human Faculty', 99–100.
  31. *Ibid.* 99.
  32. Romanes, *Mental Evolution in Man*, 222.
  33. Review Article, *Quarterly Review*, 16 (1889), 528–42 at 533–4. Works reviewed included three on the Gardens, the *Life of Frank Buckland*, and John Lubbock's *The Senses of Animals*.
  34. See e.g. George John Romanes, *Mental Evolution in Animals* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench and Co., 1883), 114–15, 120, and *Mental Evolution in Man*, 26, 40, 122.
  35. F. Max Müller, 'Lectures on Mr Darwin's Philosophy of Language', *Fraser's Magazine*, 8 (1873), 1–24 at 22. A helpful collection of the key texts in these language debates is to be found in R. Harris (ed.), *The Origin of Language* (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1996).
  36. Richard Garner, 'The Simian Tongue', in three parts, *New Review*, 4–6 (1891–2), repr. in Harris (ed.), *The Origin of Language*, 314–32.
  37. Gregory Radick, 'Animal Language in the Victorian Evolutionary Debates' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge, 2000), ch. 3, and *The Simian Tongue: The Long Debate about Animal Language* (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 2007) chps 1–3, which offer an excellent survey of the debates around animal language in the late nineteenth century.
  38. Richard Garner, 'Gorillas and Chimpanzees', *Pall Mall Magazine*, 2 (1894), 919–32 at 919.
  39. *Ibid.* 931.
  40. Radick, 'Animal Language', 195.
  41. Bill Nye, 'Personal Experiences in Monkey Language', *Pall Mall Magazine*, 3 (1894), 648–55.

#### CHAPTER 14: CHILD STUDY IN THE 1890S

1. Alexander Chamberlain, *The Child: A Study in the Evolution of Man* (London: Walter Scott, 1900), 464.
2. G. Stanley Hall, *Adolescence*, i, pp. x–xi.

3. *Ibid.*, ii. 59–60.
4. *Ibid.*, ii. 65–6.
5. Douglas Mao notes, in *Fateful Beauty: Aesthetic Environments, Juvenile Development, and Literature, 1860–1960* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), that the late 19th c. saw the dawn of the Age of the Child Studied (p. 30). Although the focus of this work is on child development and literature with reference to ideas of beauty and environment, there are some very interesting crossovers with my own work.
6. For details of various aspects of these developments see Adrian Wooldridge, *Measuring the Mind: Education and Psychology in England, c. 1860–c.1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); George K. Behlmer, *Friends of the Family: The English Home and its Guardians, 1850–1940* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), ch. 3; Gurjeva, ‘Everyday Bourgeois Science’ and ‘James Sully and Scientific Psychology, 1870–1910’, in G. D. Bunn, A. D. Lovie, and G. D. Richards (eds.), *Psychology in Britain: Historical Essays and Personal Reflections* (Leicester and London: British Psychological Society Books and the Science Museum, 2001), 72–94. For an abridged version of the Stanley Hall article ‘The Contents of Children’s Minds’, which first appeared in the *Princeton Review* (1883), see Wayne Dennis (ed.), *Historical Readings in Developmental Psychology* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1972), 119–37.
7. James Sully, ‘On the Observation of Some Moral Aspects of Children’, *The Paidologist*, 2 (1900), 64–9 at 65.
8. Perez, *The First Three Years of Childhood*, p. viii.
9. G. Stanley Hall, ‘Introductory Words’, *The Paidologist: The Organ of the British Child-Study Association*, 1 (1899), 5–8 at 8.
10. *Ibid.* 5.
11. For example, a detailed study of the *Lancet* reveals very little attention paid to child development until 1884, when it takes up the cause of ‘over-pressure in schools’ in response to James Crichton Browne’s report (see editorials on 11 Oct., 15 and 22 Nov., and the responding letter ‘Overpressure in Schools’ on 29 Nov. 1884). Thereafter there are numerous articles on this topic which turn, in the 1890s, into the wider preoccupation with the development of child study. On 25 Jan. 1896 (‘A Study of Childhood’, 249) it offers its own addition to ‘baby-lore’, printing what it terms a ‘delicious production’ of a 7-year-old child, which it commends to the notice of Professor Sully. With the exception of baby farming and questions of infant mortality, children figure remarkably little in the pages of the *Lancet* until the 1880s, when the number of headings under which they feature rapidly diversifies. Even surgical reporting of infant cases partakes of this new level of interest.
12. James Sully, for example, published a paper read before the Education Society, ‘On the Training of the Imagination’, *Journal of Education*, 6 (1884), 301–4. H. G. Wells was a subsequent contributor, offering, in NS 14 (1892), two articles on ‘A Plea for the Study of the Teacher’, 29–30, and ‘On the True Lever of Education’, 525–7.

13. *Journal of Education*, 5 (1883), 417.
14. See 'Dr Warner on the Physiology of the Child', *Journal of Education*, 8 (1886), 454, and Francis Warner, 'Teachers and Parents', *Journal of Education*, 10 (1888), 183-4, and Charles Roberts, 'The Contents of Children's Minds', *Journal of Education*, 7 (1885), 121-3.
15. Mary Louch, 'A Laboratory for Child-Study', *Journal of Education*, 17 (1895), 21-4. Hall had studied under William James at Harvard (where psychological experimentation was first introduced in America) and with the father of experimental psychology, William Wundt, in Germany.
16. A. Tolman Smith, 'Browning's "Sordello": A Study in the Psychology of Childhood', *Poet Lore*, 6 (1894), 238-43 at 238.
17. Meynell, *The Children* (1897). This collection of essays by the poet Alice Meynell was part of a very eclectic series on children published by the Bodley Head press which included literary works on and for children, most significantly Kenneth Grahame's *The Golden Age*. Ennis Richmond, *The Mind of a Child* (1901), offered another reflective, or impressionistic, treatment which was strongly opposed to the development of a science of the child. Baroness Marenholtz-Bulow, *Child and Child Nature: Contributions to the Understanding of Froebel's Educational Theories*, trans. A. M. Christie, 8th edn. (1879; London: Sonnenschein, 1894); Froebel's work, *The Education of Man* (1826) was first translated in 1887. His emphasis on the importance of play and his argument that the human being 'must pass through all preceding phases of human development and culture' ensured his theories played a crucial role in the interlinked areas of education and child study. Nathan Oppenheim, *The Development of the Child* (London and New York: Macmillan, 1898), is an American study which largely synthesized others' contributions. More significant was James Mark Baldwin, *Mental Development in the Child and the Race* (1895). Further French contributions included G. Compayré, *L'Évolution intellectuelle et morale de l'enfant* (1893), and an additional two works from Perez.
18. For further details on Charlotte Mason and the PNEU, see Behlmer, *Friends of the Family*, 149-59.
19. Anon., 'The Cry of the Parents. By One of Them', *Macmillan's Magazine*, 62 (1890), 55-8 at 56.
20. See *Paidologist*, 1 (1899), 69, and Wooldridge, *Measuring the Mind*, 36-8.
21. *Paidologist*, 1 (1899), 4.
22. Francis Galton had included children in his mass anthropometric measuring schemes from the early 1880s. In 1884 he had published the *Life History Album*, under the direction of the Collective Investigation Committee of the British Medical Association, for parents to record a child's life and 'biological experience' (p. 1).
23. *Paidologist*, 1 (1899), 107.
24. See e.g. Mrs Sherbrook Wallace, 'My Square Yard of Earth', *Paidologist*, 1 (1899), 161-3.

25. Earl Barnes, 'Methods of Studying Children', *The Paidologist*, 1 (1899), 9–17 at 9.
26. Ibid. 17. The James quote is from *The Principles of Psychology* but, interestingly, James is actually blaming Darwin and Galton, not Hall. See William James, *Principles of Psychology*, 2 vols., *Works of William James*, ed. Frederick H. Burkhardt et al. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981), i. 193.
27. Alice Woods, who was a member of the BCSA committee and very active in promoting progressive theories of education, spoke on the dangers of 'arousing a morbid self-consciousness in the children studied' and of 'arriving at conclusions by unscientific methods and of allowing interest to degenerate into sentimentality', whilst Margaret McMillan, another powerful educational innovator, spoke on the child's spontaneous movements; *Paidologist*, 1 (1899), 130. Woods later wrote *Educational Experiments in England* (London: Methuen, 1920). For details on McMillan's career see Carolyn Steedman, *Childhood, Culture and Class in Britain: The Career of Margaret McMillan, 1860–1931* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990). Interestingly, the journal was not supportive of her work, giving a very critical review of Margaret McMillan, *Early Childhood* (London: S. Sonnenschein and Co., 1900). See *Paidologist*, 2 (1900), 89.
28. T. S. Clouston, 'What the Brain has to do in Youth besides "Getting Educated"', *Paidologist*, 1 (1899), 22.
29. Lloyd Morgan, 'Our Double Acrostic', *Paidologist*, 1 (1899), 47–8.
30. Mary Louch, one of the founders of the organization, was also the first editor of the *Paidologist*. She is not named as such, but the second volume notes that someone else has taken over temporarily during her ill health. *Paidologist*, 2 (1900), opening remarks of April and July issues.
31. Millicent Shinn's first publication on child development was 'The First Two Years of the Child', published in *Proceedings of the National Congress of Education, Chicago, 1893* (New York: National Education Association). Her doctoral dissertation, 'The Development of the Child', was published by the University of California at Berkeley in three parts between 1893 and 1899. One of her most popular and influential works was *The Biography of a Baby* (Boston: Houghton, 1900).
32. Louis Robinson, 'Darwinism in the Nursery', *Nineteenth Century*, 30 (1891), 831–42 at 832.
33. Ibid. 832.
34. Ibid. 838.
35. Louis Robinson, 'Reflex Action (Physiological)' in D. H. Tuke, *A Dictionary of Psychological Medicine* (London: Churchill, 1892), 1074–6. In reporting the original article the *Review of Reviews* had noted sardonically, 'Mr. Knowles has not yet developed sufficient enterprise to enable him to publish Dr. Robinson's photographs. "Darwinism in the Nursery": Curious Experiments with Babies', *Review of Reviews*, 4 (1891), 500. I am indebted to Gowan Dawson for this reference.
36. Robinson, 'Darwinism', 838.



37. Robinson's work provoked extended debate in the periodical press. In 1897, for example, the *Lancet* published a letter entitled 'The Prehensile Powers of the Hands of the Human Infant' by Walter Kidd (16 Oct., pp. 1009–10). Kidd acknowledges that Robinson's research had been supported by Romanes in *Darwin, and After Darwin* (1892–7), but nonetheless he attempts to refute Robinson's theory. His contribution provoked, in turn, supportive letters (23 Oct., p. 1348 and 20 Nov., p. 1415).
38. Honnor Morten, *Child Nurture* (1911), quoted in Christina Hardyment, *Dream Babies: Child Care from Locke to Spock* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1983), 105.
39. Louis Robinson, 'The Meaning of a Baby's Footprint', *Nineteenth Century*, 31 (1892), 795–806 at 804.
40. *Ibid.* 805.
41. Louis Robinson, 'Darwinism and Swimming: A Theory', *Nineteenth Century*, 34 (1893), 721–32; *id.*, 'The Child and the Savage: A Study of Primitive Man', *Blackwood's Magazine*, 151 (1892), 568–72.
42. 'If further elucidation be needed', Spencer remarked, of his theory concerning the higher evolution of the European, 'we may find it in every nursery. The infant European has sundry marked points of resemblance to the lower human races; as in the flatness of the alae of the nose, the depression of its bridge, the divergence and forward opening of the nostrils, the form of the lips, the absence of a frontal sinus, the width between the eyes, the smallness of the legs.' Herbert Spencer, 'Progress: Its Law and Cause', in *Essays: Scientific, Political, and Speculative* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, and Roberts, 1858), 10. The essay was first published the previous year in the radical *Westminster Review*, NS 11, 445–85.
43. S. S. Buckman, 'Babies and Monkeys', *Nineteenth Century*, 36 (1894), 727–43 at 727–8. Further references are given in the text.
44. Crichton Browne, 'Education and the Nervous System', 379.
45. Buckman's article was also printed in the American publication *Popular Science Monthly*, 46 (1894–5), 371–88, and attracted extensive popular attention on both sides of the Atlantic. A later article, 'Human Babies: Some of their Characters', *Proceedings of the Cotteswold Naturalists' Field Club*, 13 (1899), 89–121, follows Robinson's example in using photographs to illustrate the parallels of animal and infant development (comparing the posture of his daughter just learning to stand with that of his cat).
46. James Sully, *Mind*, NS 2 (1893), 420–1. The thirteen categories are: Attention and Observation; Memory; Imagination and Fancy; Reasoning; Language; Pleasure and Pain; Fear; Self-feeling; Sympathy and Affection; Artistic Taste; Moral and Religious Feeling; Volition; Artistic Production.
47. James Sully, 'The New Study of Children', *Fortnightly Review*, 58 (1895), 723–37.
48. *Ibid.* 725.
49. *Ibid.* 729.

50. See *The Correspondence of Charles Darwin*, iv. 417, and Preyer, *The Mind of the Child, Part I*, 294–300. Preyer carefully differentiated different kind of smiles. In the section of *Studies of Childhood*, in which he offers a veiled account of his own diary of the development of his son, Clifford, Sully notes that he had wrongly thought he had seen a smile on the third day, but now realizes (with a footnote to Darwin) that this could not have been a ‘true smile’, which could only occur at around forty–five days (p. 407).
51. Sully, ‘New Study’, 731. In reworking this material for *Studies of Childhood*, Sully retained this passage, but excised a subsequent one where he notes that ‘the child-lover, like other lovers, seeks the object of his love’ (ibid.). Although the sensitivities which today surround the term ‘child-love’ were clearly not operative in the Victorian era, it is probable that this textual change was motivated by the sense that the analogy with romantic love undermined the vaunted objectivity of the male scientific observer.
52. Ibid. 733.
53. Ibid. 736.
54. Ibid. 737. Sully’s difficulties in negotiating this gendered terrain are reflected in his rewriting of this passage for the book version, where women are simultaneously given a higher profile but also more directly excluded from professional observation. See James Sully, *Studies of Childhood* (London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1896), 22–4.
55. James Sully, ‘The Child in Recent English Literature’, *Fortnightly Review*, 61 (1897), 218–28 (pp. 218–20).
56. Alice Meynell, *The Children*. The book formed one of the Bodley Head series on childhood. The advertisement, included in this work and others of the series, carried the following extract from George Meredith’s review in the *National Review*: ‘Her manner presents to me the image of one accustomed to walk in holy places and keep the eye of a fresh mind on our tangled world. . . . Her knowledge and her maternal love of children are shewn in her ready entry into the childish state and transcript of its germinal ideas . . . only deep love could furnish the intimate knowledge to expound them so.’
57. Sully, ‘Recent English Literature’, 227, 228.
58. Ibid. 225. The two books were republished together in 1897: William Canton, *The Invisible Playmate* and *W. V. Her Book* (London: Isbister and Co., 1897). *The Invisible Playmate* purports to be based on a series of letters by a father who ‘affected to be engrossed in ethnological and linguistic studies based on observation of [his daughter’s] experiments in life and language’ (p. 16). The father suffered the ‘devastating loss’ of his 6-year-old daughter, and the letters chronicle the development of her younger sister, who adopts an ‘invisible playmate’, revealed, on this daughter’s deathbed, to be her older sister. The text thus ends on a note of supernatural revelation, far out of keeping, one would have thought, with Sully’s own orientation.
59. Sully notes that ‘In spite of the fashionable Weismannism of the hour there are evolutionists who hold that in the early manifested tendencies of the child we

- can discern signs of a hereditary transmission of the effects of ancestral experiences and activities'; 'New Study', 728. For a very helpful discussion of Herbert Spencer's and G. H. Lewes's theories of evolutionary psychology see Rick Rylance, *Victorian Psychology and British Culture, 1850–1880* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), chs. 6 and 7.
60. Sully, 'New Study', 727.
  61. Sully, *Studies of Childhood*, 28. Further references are given in the text.
  62. *Ibid.* 38. His examples include Stevenson's poetry and Canton's *The Invisible Playmate*.
  63. The concern with children's cruelty to animals can be traced further back to Locke, who argued in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* that children should be brought up with an 'abhorrence of "killing or tormenting any living creature": 'For the custom of tormenting and killing of beasts, will, by degrees, harden their minds even towards men; and they who delight in the suffering and destruction of inferior creatures, will not be apt to be very compassionate or benign to those of their own kind', sect. 116, pp. 180–1.
  64. Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny', in *Art and Literature*, ed. Albert Dickson (Pelican Freud Library, 14; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), 340. In Freud's essay on 'Infantile Sexuality', for example, Sully's *Studies of Childhood* was one of the well-known books on child psychology he cites which did not deal adequately with child sexuality; *A Case of Hysteria, Three Essays on Sexuality and Other Works*, 174. Freud drew more positively on Sully's work in 'The Interpretation of Dreams', in which he developed the idea of the mind as a palimpsest outlined in Sully's essay, 'The Dream as a Revelation', *Fortnightly Review*, 59 (1893), 354–65; see *The Standard Edition*, iv (1900), 135 (note added 1909).
  65. Freud, 'The Uncanny', 372.
  66. *Ibid.*
  67. In her introduction to a recent reprint of *Studies of Childhood*, Susan Sugarman offers a helpful overview of the differences and similarities between the ideas of childhood in Sully and Freud. She notes that Freud sees the experience of the uncanny as an experience of adult life, but does not draw attention to the fact that it is a category previously used by Sully (London: Free Association, 2000), p. xxviii.
  68. George Romanes, 'Mind in Man and Animals', first published in *North American Review* (1885), collected in *Essays*, ed. Morgan, 75–85. These arguments were developed further in *Mental Evolution in Man*.
  69. James Sully, 'Is Man the only Reasoner?', *Nineteenth Century*, 30 (1891), 735–45.
  70. Sully, *Studies of Childhood*, 71.
  71. Preyer, *The Mind of the Child, Part II*; see esp. ch. 16, 'Development of the Child's Intellect Independently of Language'. Preyer drew extensively on examples of work with deaf mutes to make his case about the independence of thought and language (pp. 22–48).
  72. Sully, *Studies*, 144. This period saw a flurry of articles on the origins of language in relation to children. Alfred Russel Wallace published 'The Expressiveness of

Speech, or Mouth-Gesture as a Factor in the Origin of Language' in the *Fortnightly Review*, 58 (1895), 528–43, which was answered by Charles Johnston, 'The World's Baby-Talk, and the Expressiveness of Speech', *Fortnightly Review*, 60 (1896), 494–505, where he argues that 'the human race began to talk as babies begin to talk; that in the prattle of every baby, we have a repetition in a minor key of the voice of the earliest man' (p. 499). S. S. Buckman also extended his work on infancy to include the development of speech. In 'The Speech of Children', *Nineteenth Century*, 41 (1897), 793–807, he challenges Max Müller's assertion that language constituted a Rubicon between animals and humans. Taking the dictum that 'ontogeny repeats phylogeny' as his guide, he compares children's inability to pronounce consonants with that of lower races (including the Welsh and Irish). He argues that 'the infancy of speech in the individual shows what was the infancy of speech in the race, and that the vocabulary of the present-day human baby at twenty months old approximately represents the speech of adult pre-human ancestors'. He also promises a future article on the genesis of human language from the root 'cac' for excrement (an argument which draws support from Garner's work on monkey language). He differentiates the ability to comprehend from that of speech, suggesting that a baby at this stage 'is parallel to the adult stage attained by some intelligent dogs and the adolescent stage of the chimpanzee Sally' (pp. 793, 805–6). The writer and scientific popularizer Grant Allen also entered into the debates in a light-hearted article on 'The Beginnings of Speech' in *Longman's Magazine*, 24 (1894), 58–67. Müller had dismissed those who believed that the beginnings of speech lay in imitative sounds, but Allen proudly proclaims himself a member of the 'Pooh-pooh and Bow-wow' party, drawing on the speech of children and savages, and the onomatopoeic basis of everyday speech to make his point. For a general survey of the language debates through into present times, see Gregory Radick, *The Simian Tongue: The Long Debate about Animal Language*.

73. Taine, 'M. Taine on the Acquisition of Language by Children', 258, 257.
74. Sully, *Studies of Childhood*, 166.
75. In this he is drawing directly, he notes, on Preyer's extended experiments with the mirror, and also Darwin's descriptions of monkeys in front of mirrors (*Studies*, 113). Taine had similarly emphasized the role of the mirror in child development, but in this case the child, told that the figure in the mirror was 'bébé, eagerly identified the figure of bébé next time, and then applied the term to all small statues or figures in pictures' (Taine, 'Acquisition of Language', 256).
76. Sully, *Studies of Childhood*, 113.
77. *Ibid.* 114. Sully was drawing, as I shall discuss in the next chapter, on George Sand's autobiography, *Story of My Life*.
78. A brief survey of the reviews and the book's publication and translation history is given in the biographical introduction by Elizabeth Valentine which follows the Sugarman introduction to the edition of *Studies of Childhood* cited in n. 67, p. xlv.

79. Alice Woods (1849–1941) was an educational reformer and great supporter of co-education, as outlined in her influential work, *Educational Experiments in England* (London: Methuen, 1920). She was also a great devotee of the works of Meredith, publishing *George Meredith as Champion of Women and of Progressive Education* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1937). Margaret Bryant has written a helpful entry on her for the new *ODNB*, although it focuses entirely on her educational work and does not mention her involvement in the child study movement.
80. Alice Woods, 'Review of James Sully, *Studies of Childhood*', *Mind*, NS 5 (1896), 256–61 at 257.
81. *Ibid.* 260.
82. For a list of British childcare and child study periodicals from this period see Gurjeva, 'Everyday Bourgeois Science', 243.
83. See Sally Shuttleworth, Gowan Dawson and Richard Noakes, 'Women, Science and Culture: Science in the Nineteenth-Century Periodical' in *Women: A Cultural Review*, 12 (2001), 57–70 at 62–4.
84. 'Editorial Address', *Baby*, 1 (1887), 13.
85. Francis Warner, 'How to Observe a Baby', *Baby*, 1 (1887), 3–4. Warner went on to write a range of texts on child development, including *The Study of Children and their School Training* (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1897), and *The Nervous System of the Child* (New York and London: Macmillan and Co., 1900).
86. Editorial, *Baby*, 2 (1888–9), 1. The offending article was probably Mona Caird, 'Marriage', *Westminster Review*, 130 (1888), 186–201.
87. The emergence of scientific child study brought with it a whole new range of Latinate vocabulary to create an aura of greater dignity: Paediatric (1893–4); Paedology (the study of the nature of children, 1894); Paedotrophy (the rearing of children). The *OED* cites Sully in *Harper's Magazine*, June 1889.
88. Jessica Waller, 'Mental and Physical Training of Children', *Nineteenth Century*, 26 (1889), 659–67. Editorial Note, *Baby*, 2 (1888–9), 266.
89. Editorial Note, *Baby*, 2 (1888–9), 267.
90. James Sully, 'Proposed Laboratory for Experimental Psychology at University College', *Journal of Education*, NS 19 (1897), 355–6 at 355, quoted in Elizabeth R. Valentine, 'The Founding of the Psychological Laboratory, University College London: "Dear Galton... Yours truly, J. Sully"', *History of Psychology*, 2 (1999), 204–18 at 210. For further details of Sully's role see Gurjeva, 'Everyday Bourgeois Science', ch. 5.
91. Similar anxieties regarding child research were recorded in the *Lancet*, 20 Feb. 1897, in a report on the founding of a Manchester branch of the British Association of Child Study: 'To those who had read the delightful essays of Professor Sully it was not necessary to explain the object of the society. During the last few months some of their candid friends had asked if they were going to experiment on newly-born babies—if they were going to put pepper on their tongues to try to find out at what exact period they appreciated these useful condiments. They were asked if they were going to repeat the experiments on

the prehensile faculty of infants in order to demonstrate their affinities with our lower relations, and if it was intended to make the nursery a temple and the baby an idol' ('Child Study', 533). This arch mode of reporting nonetheless conveys very well how deeply engrained these iconic images of baby experimentation had become.

CHAPTER 15: AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND THE SCIENCE OF  
CHILD STUDY

1. Henry Maudsley, 'The New Psychology', *Journal of Mental Science*, 46 (1900), 411–26 at 413.
2. *Ibid.* 414–15.
3. *Ibid.* 415.
4. *Ibid.* 416.
5. Earl Barnes, 'Methods of Studying Children', *Paidologist*, 1 (1899), 9–17 at 5–6.
6. Sully, 'George Eliot's Art', 389, 385.
7. *Histoire de ma vie* was reviewed in England as soon as it appeared. See 'Belles Lettres', *Westminster Review*, NS 8 (1855), 598–604, for a very positive review by George Eliot.
8. Quoted in Patricia Thomson, *George Sand and the Victorians: Her Influence and Reputation in Nineteenth-Century England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), 6. Henry James wrote half a dozen essays on George Sand spread through his career, and in later life shared his enthusiasm for Sand with Edith Wharton, visiting her childhood home together. See *Henry James Letters*, ed. Leon Edel, 4 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974–84), iv. 602.
9. *Story of My Life: The Autobiography of George Sand*, a Group Translation ed. by Thelma Jurgau (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1991), 422. Further references to this edition will be given after quotations in the text. For theories of recapitulation in France and Germany leading up to the 1850s, see Stephen Jay Gould, *Ontogeny and Phylogeny*, ch.3. A good summary of Comte's use of the idea that the development of the individual follows that of the race is to be found in Richard Vernon, 'Auguste Comte and "Development": A Note', *History and Theory*, 17 (1978), 323–6.
10. Sully, *Studies of Childhood*, 490.
11. *Ibid.* 72, 55.
12. *Ibid.* 507.
13. John Lubbock, *Origin of Civilisation* (1870), cited in Sully, *Studies of Childhood*, 45. Sand here appears in Sully's general discussion of 'The Age of Imagination', an earlier chapter in *Studies of Childhood*.
14. Sully, *Studies of Childhood*, 489.
15. Recent criticism of Sand's text has focused very heavily on issues of gender. See Jurgau's very helpful critical introduction to *Story of My Life*, and Janet Hiddleston, *George Sand and Autobiography* (Oxford: Legenda (European

- Humanities Research Centre), 1999) for a good overview of contemporary scholarship on the text.
16. Sand's great-grandfather, Maurice, Comte de Saxe, Duc de Courlande et de Semigalle, was the illegitimate son of Frédéric-Auguste de Saxe, Elector of Saxony and King of Poland. For further details see Walter D. Gray, 'Historical Introduction', in *Story of My Life*, ed. Jurgau, 31–52.
  17. Sully's study was published as 'The Story of a Child', *Longman's Magazine*, 19 (1891–2), 200–14. I am using the translation, *The Story of a Child*, trans. Caroline F. Smith (Boston: C. C. Birchard and Co., 1901), which was explicitly offered as a necessary supplement to scientific forms of child study. In the words of the preface by E. H. Griggs, 'A better illustration of the subtle worth of such literature, in developing appreciation of those inner deeps of child life that escape definition and evaporate from the figures of the statistician, could scarcely be found than Pierre Loti's "Story of a Child". There is scarcely a fact in the book. It tells not what the child did or what was done to him, but what he felt, thought, dreamed' (p. ix). Further references to this edition will be given in the text. In 1906 *The Paidologist* ran an article on how to set up a British Child-Study Association reading circle, complete with recommended texts. Amidst the works of Sully, Barnes, Warner, Baldwin, and Hall, the only literary work recommended was Loti's *Story of a Child*. Unsigned, 'British Child-Study Association Reading Circles', *Paidologist*, 8 (1906), 109–111.
  18. Rosemary Lloyd offers an excellent reading of the text in *The Land of Lost Content: Children and Childhood in Nineteenth-Century French Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 158–69. She suggests 'it may well be the first French autobiographical novel that not only acknowledges fully the central role of childhood in the formation of the adult, but also consistently attempts to find images, a language, and a structure adequate to capturing the fluctuations of the child's personality' (p. 158).
  19. Sully, 'Story of a Child', 200.
  20. Sully also drew on two articles by the children's writer Jean Ingelow in which she charts her own earliest memories back to one year and five months, and offers memories contributed by friends which also date to well before age 3. Of those who do not have recollections prior to language she notes, 'They knew apparently nothing of the vision-like clearness and defined certainty, which belong to a sight beheld ere there is intelligence to perceive what it is or what it means'. 'The History of an Infancy', *Longman's Magazine*, 15 (1890), 266–76, 379–90 at 271. Sully uses Ingelow's account of how she puzzled 'as to whether it is really true that anything had been and lived before I was there to see it' to reinforce his argument that 'the child is naturally a Berkeleyan, in so far at least that for him the reality of things is reality for his own sense-perceptions'. See Sully, *Studies of Childhood*, 118.
  21. Sully, 'Story of a Child', 202. Sand, however, also dates her first memories from the age of 2, when a nurse had let her fall and she had knocked her head on the fireplace: 'All the commotion, the shock to the nervous system opened

- me to self-awareness, and I saw clearly—I still see—the reddish marble of the mantelpiece, my blood running, the distraught face of the nursemaid' (p. 418).
22. Darwin, 'A Biographical Sketch of an Infant', 288.
  23. Sully, *Studies of Childhood*, 198–9, 208–9.
  24. Ibid. 203. See Loti, *The Story of a Child*, 16–18.
  25. Burnett at this period was close friends with those other chroniclers of childhood considered here, Henry James and Edmund Gosse. In a letter to Gosse in 1896 in which he imagines his own funeral, James nominates Gosse and 'Mrs Burnett' as two of his pall bearers; see *Selected Letters of Henry James to Edmund Gosse, 1882–1915: A Literary Friendship*, ed. Rayburn S. Moore (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 2 Feb. 1896, p. 138.
  26. Frances Hodgson Burnett, *The One I Knew the Best of All* (1893), pp. vii, viii. Further references to this edition will be given in the text. Penny Brown offers a perceptive account of this work in *The Captured World*, 125–8.
  27. Sully, *Studies of Childhood*, 16, 43–4, 237, 257.
  28. See Preyer, *The Mind of the Child, Part II*, 218–20.
  29. In *Growing Up in England: The Experience of Childhood, 1600–1914*, Anthony Fletcher prints an account from Eva Knatchbull's childhood diary in 1874 of organizing a doll's funeral, complete with black velvet for the pall and turf upon the mound (p. 308). The omnipresence of death in Victorian culture clearly had a marked impact on forms of children's play.
  30. Ellen Key's work *The Century of the Child* (first published in Swedish in 1900) was not published in English until 1909. Since Hodgson Burnett is writing in 1893, it is clear that the idea of a children's century was an idea in popular usage from at least the early 1890s.
  31. See Sully, *Studies of Childhood*, ch. 4, 'Products of Child-Thought'.
  32. Towards the end of her childhood, however, Burnett experienced a complete change in her life when loss of the family fortune led to their emigration, and she exchanged middle-class life in Manchester for relative poverty in the wild landscape of Tennessee.
  33. *Autobiography of a Child* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood, 1899). All further references to this edition will be given in the text. The work was first published anonymously in *Blackwood's Magazine*, 1898–9, and then as a book, also anonymously, in 1899. It was also published, however, in the same year by an American press in New York, Dodd, Mead and Company, with Hannah Lynch's name attached. Lynch (1862–1904) was born in Dublin. She later joined the Ladies' Land League and became closely associated with Fanny Parnell. She published various novels from 1885 onwards, numerous periodical articles, and an excellent critical study of George Meredith in 1891. As an adult she lived in Spain, Greece, and France, and was for a time the Paris correspondent of the *Academy*.
  34. Samuel Butler had started to write his autobiographically based novel, *The Way of All Flesh*, in 1873, finally laying it aside in 1884. It was published



- posthumously in 1903. The text thus preceded the child study movement; its angry delineation of childhood in a ‘God-fearing’ family is oriented primarily to a rethinking of the nature of childhood in the light of theories of inherited memory. See Sally Shuttleworth, ‘Evolutionary Psychology and *The Way of All Flesh*’, in James G. Paradis (ed.), *Samuel Butler, Victorian against the Grain: A Critical Overview* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 143–69.
35. Penny Brown in *The Captured World* offers a good reading of the text (pp. 133–6) based on the assumption it is autobiographical.
  36. Henry James, *What Maisie Knew*, ed. Adrian Poole (1897; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 73.
  37. Opening Editorial, *The Paidologist*, 1 (1899), 4.
  38. The novel is not a *Bildungsroman* since it ends abruptly at the age of 12 when Angela returns to Ireland. There is then, no sense of closure, or healing, although Lynch did insert a short coda which sits rather oddly, and speaks nostalgically, and generally, about the times of childhood when, ‘even if tears seem the most prominent part of our inheritance’, at least at that period there was the magic of hope: ‘In youth, sorrow fells us today, and joy awakes us tomorrow’ (pp. 269–70). This idealizing of childhood seems to belong almost to another text, and not to the chronicle of intense suffering the reader has just experienced.

#### CHAPTER 16: UNNATURAL HISTORY

1. Edmund Gosse, *Father and Son: A Study of Two Temperaments*, ed. Abbs, 33. Further references to this work will be given in the text.
2. For a helpful textual history, see *Father and Son*, ed. Michael Newton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. xxix–xxxiii.
3. Quoted in Anne Thwaite, *Edmund Gosse: A Literary Landscape 1849–1928* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1984), 438. In his excellent recent edition of *Father and Son*, Michael Newton prints Frazer’s two very positive letters of reply (20 Oct. and 10 Nov. 1909) held in the Brotherton Collection, University of Leeds, as an appendix, pp. 205–6. Frazer greets *Father and Son* as a positive contribution to the psychology of religion, but does not focus on its anthropological dimensions.
4. See Thwaite, *Edmund Gosse*, 313, 353. Like James Sully, Gosse had been a close friend of R. L. Stevenson, and both Sully and Gosse had been involved at the same time in the circle of writers Leslie Stephen had created around the *Cornhill* from the 1870s. Gosse was extraordinarily well connected in literary circles, and included Kipling, Hardy, and James amongst his close friends in the 1890s.
5. Sully, *Studies of Childhood*, 229.
6. Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*, ed. Angus Calder (1861; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965), 35–6, 46.
7. Howard Helsingier has noted the importance of lying in the text, which he interprets as ‘a defence of language as the instrument of self-creation, self-discovery,

and self-preservation'; 'Credence and Credibility: The Concern for Honesty in Victorian Autobiography', in George P. Landow (ed.), *Approaches to Victorian Autobiography* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1979), 58.

8. See Earl Barnes, *Studies in Education*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, privately printed, n.d.) and *The Psychology of Childhood and Youth* (New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1914), 25–6. A frequently quoted work in this literature was William Canton, *The Invisible Playmate* and *W. V. her Book* (1897).
9. Sully, *Studies of Childhood*, 115.
10. Charcot had noted that hysteria 'is more common than is generally believed in boys about twelve or thirteen years of age'. Interestingly, in line with Gosse's association of his 'natural magic' with his hysteria, Charcot singles out forms of religious and spiritualist beliefs as major causes of hysteria, particularly 'the belief in the marvellous and the supernatural which is fostered and exaggerated by excessive religious exercises, and the related order of ideas, spiritualism and its practices'; J. M. Charcot, *Clinical Lectures on Diseases of the Nervous System Delivered at the Infirmary of La Salpêtrière by Professor J. M. Charcot*, trans. Thomas Savill (London: The New Sydenham Society, 1889), 78, 198. Lecture VI is devoted entirely to 'Hysteria in Boys'.
11. Gosse notes that 'The question of the efficacy of prayer, which has puzzled wiser heads than mine was, began to trouble me' (p. 63). Galton's essay 'Statistical Inquiries into the Efficacy of Prayer' was first published in the *Fortnightly Review*, NS 12 (1872), 125–35. It was collected into *Inquiries into Human Faculty and its Development* in 1883, but then excluded due to religious sensitivities from a second reprinting, and was only reinserted in the 1907 publication of the text (London: J. M. Dent, 1907).
12. In a famous scene in Butler's *The Way of All Flesh*, the infant Ernest is beaten for mispronouncing 'come' in a hymn, and his father then rings the bell for prayers, 'red-handed as he was'. The narrator is vicious with reference to Ernest's father, Theobald, who considers himself exceptionally virtuous, and yet vents all his rage and tensions on his son; Samuel Butler, *Ernest Pontifex, or The Way of All Flesh*, ed. Daniel F. Howard (London: Methuen, 1964), 85–6, 96–7. Justification of child punishment by reference to Scripture was part of the culture of child-rearing in many religious households of the mid-19th c. Thus *The Family Monitor, Or a Help to Domestic Happiness* by John Angell James (11th edn., London: Hamilton, Adams and Co., 1861) advises children: 'Remember that your parents are commanded by God to correct your faults, that they are actuated by love in performing this self-denying duty, and that it costs them more pain to inflict it, than it does you to endure it' (ch. 6, 'The Duties of Children to their Parents'), 208–9.
13. Edmund Gosse, *The Naturalist of the Sea-Shore: The Life of Philip Henry Gosse* (London: William Heinemann, 1896), 223. The first part of the title was added for this later popular edition, but the text appears to have remained the same.
14. In his (auto)biography (largely put together by Hardy, but published by his wife Florence), Hardy notes the circumstances of his birth: 'Had it not been for

- the common sense of the estimable woman who attended as monthly nurse, he might never have walked this earth. At his birth he was thrown aside as dead until rescued by her as she exclaimed to the surgeon, “Dead! Stop a minute: he’s alive enough, sure!”; Florence Emily Hardy, *The Life of Thomas Hardy, 1840–1928* (London: Macmillan, 1962), 14.
15. George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss*, ed. Haight, 385. The original source is probably Montesquieu: ‘Happy the people whose Annals are blank in History-books.’
  16. *Ibid.* 66.
  17. Letter of 4 May 1858, quoted in *Life of Philip Henry Gosse*, 280–3. Kingsley did, however, accept Gosse’s theory of prochronic, as opposed to diachronic time, and perhaps his greatest concern at this stage was that he felt the book actually gave ammunition to the arguments of transformation put forward in *Vestiges of Creation*. (Kingsley was to support Darwin’s theories, however, once the *Origin* was published.)
  18. Philip Henry Gosse, *Evenings at the Microscope* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1859), p. v.
  19. Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or The Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (New York: Avenel Books, 1979), 114. Darwin adopts the celebratory rhetoric of natural theology, but replaces achieved perfection with the temporal process of adaptation. As Gillian Beer and other scholars have noted, the *Origin* is an internally divided text, where Darwin’s sense of the ‘struggle for existence’ is balanced against his admiration for ‘all those exquisite adaptations’ which take place; see Beer, *Darwin’s Plots*.
  20. The *TLS* review had asked ‘how far in the interests of popular edification or amusement it is legitimate to expose the weaknesses and inconsistencies of a good man who is also one’s father’. Quoted in Thwaite, *Edmund Gosse*, 434.
  21. Gosse, *Father and Son*, ed. Newton, 222 n. 82.
  22. Sully, ‘The Dream as a Revelation’ (1893), 354–65. The essay, which was cited approvingly by Freud in 1909 additions to *The Interpretation of Dreams*, suggests that the mind is a palimpsest, and that in dreams we revert to earlier repressed selves, either from our own experience, or, in a more evolutionary frame, from inherited memory. For the Freud citation see *The Standard Edition*, iv. 135.
  23. Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. Joyce Crick, with introduction and notes by Ritchie Robertson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 127–40. (This edition is based on the 1900 text.) Freud’s text, when published in Germany in 1899/1900, had little impact, and it was not translated into English until 1913, so it is unlikely that Gosse would have had any knowledge of it. His responses in later years to Freudian analysis were generally disapproving; thus he noted in an essay on Lyly collected in *Silhouettes* (London: Heinemann, 1925) that he was using the term psycho-analysis ‘in its original and not in its Freudian sense, since Lyly has none of the disagreeable sexual taint so beloved in these days by our popular “psycho-analytic” novelists’ (p. 26).
  24. Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 304–5.

25. Heather Henderson offers a compelling interpretation of the dream as part of the text's systematic reversals of Philip Gosse's typology, and particularly his preoccupation with *Revelations*. Carmine here stands for the Scarlet Woman, the symbol of Rome. Mary Flaw, who carried him away whilst his father was preaching, is linked in this reading to a reversal of the Virgin Mary, and to the angel who carries St John away to see the Scarlet Woman: 'The child's dream, then, is clearly a nightmarish translation of Saint John's vision. Revelation has shaped the child's consciousness just as much as it has the father's, but he totally subverts the meaning of the terms'; *The Victorian Self: Autobiography and Biblical Narrative* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), 135.
26. In her interesting chapter on *Father and Son* Linda Peterson reads the work as a parody of spiritual autobiography; see *Victorian Autobiography: The Tradition of Self-Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), ch. 6. Edmund's juvenile works are seen as a prefiguration of the more deliberate parody of his mature autobiography (p. 171).
27. Sully, *Studies of Childhood*, 244.
28. *Ibid.* 331–98 at 397.
29. *Ibid.* 323. In formulating his theories of the 'child as artist' Sully drew on his friend Robert Louis Stevenson's influential essay 'Child's Play' (1878).
30. Samuel Wilks, 'Notes from the History of my Parrot, in Reference to the Nature of Language', *Journal of Mental Science*, 25 (1879), 151–61.
31. George John Romanes, 'Origin of Human Faculty' in *Essays*, ed. Morgan, 99.
32. Sully, *Studies of Childhood*, 269.
33. Gosse began *Father and Son* two years after the publication of that other text dealing with the upbringing of a Victorian child within a stern clergyman's household, *The Way of All Flesh*. In his much later comments on Butler's work, Gosse is highly critical of the bitter dislike Butler shows towards his family, but then suggests such hostility is actually permissible, as long as the text is not read as autobiography: 'So long as we regard *The Way of all Flesh* as a story, invented with the help of recollections which the novelist was at liberty to modify in any way he thought desirable, there is no quarrel to be picked with any part of it. . . . *The Way of all Flesh* is not an autobiography, but a romance founded on recollection'; Edmund Gosse, 'Samuel Butler' in *Aspects and Impressions* (London: Cassell and Co., 1922), 63. The discussion is very barbed, criticizing Butler for his self-obsession and terrible biology whilst singling out for praise the 'charm of his mind', which 'lies in its divagations, its inconsistencies, its puerile and lovable self-revelations' (p. 59).
34. On reading the manuscript in May 1907, William Heinemann suggested adding the final section, which Gosse duly did, writing in August to thank Heinemann for urging him to write it: 'Had I not done so, the book would not merely have ended abruptly, but in quite the wrong key.' Quoted in Thwaite, *Edmund Gosse*, 433.
35. *The Naturalist of the Sea-Shore: The Life of Philip Henry Gosse*, 279.

36. Quoted in Thwaite, *Edmund Gosse*, 435.
37. The germ of *Father and Son* can be traced in a letter Edmund wrote to his father in 1873 responding to his enquiries about his state of faith: 'You will, I am sure, acknowledge that in the study of science, work is done by two totally distinct orders of minds. There is the collective and the comparative. One observer notes down microscopic details and laboriously stores up what seems chaotic material; another, incapable of microscopic work, seems called to compare one large body of facts with another, and form wide theories. Among naturalists, there are men like yourself, and there are men like Darwin and Huxley. The same inherent difference of mental direction is to be found, perhaps, in all branches of thought. If I am permitted to class my own mind at all, it is certainly with the latter that I find my place, while the same minute industry that marked your investigations among rotifers and zoophytes marks your theologic study' (Evan Charteris, *The Life and Letters of Sir Edmund Gosse* (London: William Heinemann, 1931), 48). Edmund sees his father's 'microscopic interpretations' of biblical passages as of a piece with his natural history, whilst identifying himself with the broad imaginative sweep of the theories of Darwin or Huxley.
38. Frederic Harrison (a noted agnostic and devoted positivist), letter to Gosse, quoted in Thwaite, *Edmund Gosse*, 436.

#### CHAPTER 17: CHILDHOOD AS PERFORMANCE

1. Hall, 'The Contents of Children's Minds' (1883), 119–37.
2. Henry James, *What Maisie Knew*, ed. Adrian Poole, 15. Further references are given in the text.
3. Henry James, *A Small Boy and Others* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1913). The work started out as a biography of his brother William, but swiftly turned into a work on his own early development. For an exploration of some of the parallels between the two texts see John Carlos Rowe, *The Other Henry James* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), ch. 5, 'The Portrait of a Small Boy as a Young Girl: Gender Trouble in *What Maisie Knew*'.
4. William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, ed. Burkhardt et al., i. 193.
5. Sully, *Studies of Childhood*, 15. The quotation comes from the opening chapter, which reworked 'The New Study of Children'.
6. For an analysis of the impact of Stead's articles and of cultural responses to child prostitution see Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).
7. *What Maisie Knew* offers a form of childhood parallel to Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891), which he subtitled, defiantly, 'A Pure Woman'. Despite behaviour and desires which might seem to spell the end of childish innocence, James depicts Maisie as possessing, in the terms of his later preface, an 'undestroyed freshness', which allows her to 'flourish in her immoral world' (p. 11).

8. Sully, *Studies of Childhood*, 28.
9. Thomas Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, ed. Patricia Ingham (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 266.

#### CHAPTER 18: JUDE THE OBSCURE AND CHILD SUICIDE

1. The scene is often dealt with by tactful omission. In her introduction to the World's Classics edition, Patricia Ingham refers only in passing to the deaths of the children, and focuses on Jude and Sue to the entire exclusion of Father Time, pp. xx, xxi. Dennis Taylor in the Penguin edition (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1998), includes a brief account of the doctor's verdict, and the effects of Sue's incautious words (pp. xxviii–xxix), but no more.
2. 'Review of *Jude the Obscure*', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 12 Nov. 1895; repr. in *Thomas Hardy: Critical Assessments*, ed. Graham Clarke, 4 vols. (East Sussex: Helm Information, 1993), i: *The Contemporary Response*, 233.
3. Margaret Oliphant, 'The Anti-Marriage League', *Blackwood's Magazine*, 159 (1896); repr. in *Thomas Hardy: The Critical Heritage*, ed. R. G. Cox (London: Routledge, 1970), 261–2.
4. Unsigned review, *Illustrated London News*, 11 Jan. 1896; repr. in *Critical Heritage*, ed. Cox, 275.
5. A. Alvarez, 'Jude the Obscure: Afterword', in *Thomas Hardy: Critical Assessments*, ed. Clarke, iv: *A Twentieth-Century Overview*, 209.
6. Thomas Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, ed. Ingham, 11. All future references to this edition will be given in the text.
7. In his letter to Edmund Gosse, thanking him for his intelligent review of the novel, Hardy notes that, 'The "grimy" features of the story go to show the contrast between the ideal life a man wished to lead, & the squalid real life he was fated to lead. . . . The idea was meant to run all through the novel. It is, in fact to be discovered in every body's life—though it lies less on the surface perhaps than it does in my poor puppet's', in *The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy*, ed. Richard Little Purdy and Michael Millgate, 7 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), ii, 93, letter of 10 Nov. 1895.
8. Jude's own verdict, drawn from *Agamemnon*, on the death of the children: 'Things are as they are, and will be brought to their destined issue' (p. 358).
9. Jonathan Hutchinson, 'On Cruelty to Animals', *Fortnightly Review*, 20 (1876), 307–20 at 319. This volume also contained articles on Schopenhauer and Hartmann, and one by Tyndall from which Hardy took extensive notes: see *The Literary Notebooks of Thomas Hardy*, ed. Lennart A. Björk, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1985), i, nn. 855–60.
10. See e.g. J. Hillis Miller, *Thomas Hardy: Distance and Desire* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970).
11. *Literary Notebooks*, ed. Björk, ii, n. 1782. Unusually, Hardy notes the day on which he took these notes, 13 May 1891.

12. *Letters*, ii. 104. To William Archer, 2 Jan. 1896.
13. *Ibid.* 93. To Edmund Gosse, 10 Nov. 1895.
14. Edmund Gosse, review in *Cosmopolis*, 1 (Jan. 1896), 60–9, repr. in *Critical Heritage*, ed. Cox, 266–7.
15. *Literary Notebooks*, ed. Björk, i. 1311, 1352, 1362. Hardy also notes down an almost identical formulation of Edwald Hering's theory of the workings of inherited memory from Spencer's *Principles of Psychology*, i, 1465. For an excellent discussion of 19th-c. theories of organic memory, including Edwald Hering, see Laura Otis, *Organic Memory: History and the Body in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries* (Lincoln, Nebr.: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 1–40.
16. *Literary Notebooks*, ed. Björk, i. 1519. For an interesting analysis of Hardy's use of Maudsley, which focuses primarily on his theories of imagination and perception, see Patricia Gallivan, 'Science and Art in *Jude the Obscure*', in Anne Smith (ed.), *The Novels of Thomas Hardy* (London: Vision Press, 1979), 126–44.
17. Hardy comments sarcastically that the old church had been pulled down 'by a certain obliterator of historic monuments who had run down from London and back in the day' (p. 6).
18. 'How Mankind Might be Improved by Murder, Mutilation or Imprisonment', *Review of Reviews*, 2 (1890), 32. The article offers a summary of S. A. K. Strahan's paper 'The Propagation of Insanity and Allied Neuroses', *Journal of Mental Science*, 36 (July 1890), 325–88. Hardy could well have read this summary, since he took notes from the Sept. 1890 number of the *Review of Reviews* (*Literary Notebooks*, ed. Björk, ii, n. 1774). The *Review of Reviews* was one of the journals to which the Dorset County Museum subscribed (I am indebted to Michael Millgate for this information).
19. Forbes Winslow, *The Anatomy of Suicide* (London: Henry Renshaw, 1840) notes that 'The disposition to suicide may be manifested very early in life. M. Falret knew a boy, twelve years old, who hanged himself because he was only twelfth in his class' (p. 269). References to child suicide are scattered through the early volumes of the *Journal of Psychological Medicine and Mental Pathology*, with the primary contribution being a full article, 'Suicide amongst Children', 9 (1856), 296–9, reprinted from *Annales medico-psychologiques*, which reported on Fardel's findings on suicides under 16 years of age in France.
20. Henry Morselli, *Suicide: An Essay on Comparative Moral Statistics* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1882), revised and abridged by the author from the Italian version; W. Wynn Westcott, *Suicide, its History, Literature, Jurisprudence, Causation and Prevention* (London: H. K. Lewis, 1885); S. A. K. Strahan, *Suicide and Insanity: A Physiological and Sociological Study* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1893); Émile Durkheim, *Le Suicide* (Paris, 1897; first English trans. 1952). Recent studies of Victorian attitudes to suicide include Olive Anderson, *Suicide in Victorian and Edwardian England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), and Barbara T. Gates, *Victorian Suicide: Mad Crimes and Sad Histories* (Princeton:

Princeton University Press, 1988), but neither focuses on the phenomenon of child suicide.

21. Crichton Browne, 'Psychical Diseases of Early Life', 286, 315.
22. 'Suicides in England and Wales', *Journal of Mental Science*, 36 (1890), 82–4. In all the reporting, little mention is made of the difficulty of determining whether a child's death is actually suicide, although the problems of adjudication which arise with adults are necessarily intensified with reference to children. The absence of such discussion is significant in itself: it is seemingly taken for granted that children do have reasons for killing themselves, and that their actions should be taken at face value. In some cases there are notes signifying intention, but it is of course by no means clear that a child found drowned (the favourite method of girls) actually intended suicide, and even death by hanging (the favourite method of boys) could be subject to interpretation. Several commentators note, for example, that hanging is said to produce very agreeable physical sensations: would it be a complete anachronism to suggest that the behaviour associated with pop stars and politicians in our own culture had its parallels for the male youth of Victorian times?
23. [Frederic Marshall], 'Suicide', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 127 (1880), 719–35 at 726.
24. *Ibid.* 727.
25. The article was published in the same year as education became compulsory in England, following the groundwork laid by Forster's education act of 1870.
26. As Patricia Ingham notes, all references to Phillotson were introduced only after Hardy had written the first twelve chapters of the novel. The initial focus on the departure of the schoolmaster was thus a recasting of the novel (Hardy, *Jude*, 433).
27. [Marshall], 'Suicide', 728.
28. Stories of suicide, like those of strange psychological states in 19th-c. medical texts, quickly take on a life of their own, repeated endlessly from text to text, without any attempt at verification by the transmitting authors. Given the folkloric connotations of the number 7, it would seem highly likely that these two stories owe a lot to the functionings of cultural myth-creation.
29. James Crichton Browne, as we have seen, also led the way in this field, drawing still for material on Dickens's depiction of Dr Blimber's Academy in *Dombey and Son*. See e.g. 'Education and the Nervous System' (1883). See also Tuke, 'Modern Life and Insanity' (1877–8), 130–40, where increases in headaches and nervous complaints amongst poor children are linked to the introduction of compulsory Board School (p. 137). Tuke also records the suicides of two young men due to preparing for the University of London exams (p. 138).
30. Crichton Browne, 'Report of Dr Crichton-Browne to the Education Department upon the alleged Over-Pressure of Work in Public Elementary Schools' (1884), 15–19.
31. Westcott, *Suicide*, 112.
32. *Ibid.* 139.



33. Henry Maudsley, 'Heredity in Health and Disease', *Fortnightly Review*, 39 (1886), 647–59 at 650–1. Hardy took extensive notes from the *Fortnightly* in his journals, including, for example, F. W. H. Myers's article in 1885 on 'Multiplex Personality'. Since articles were signed in the *Fortnightly*, Hardy would no doubt have been drawn to an article by such an eminent author whom he admired.
34. S. A. K. Strahan, 'Consanguineous Marriages', *Westminster Review*, 135 (1891), 258–64.
35. My interpretation differs from that of Angelique Richardson in 'Hardy and Biology', in Phillip Mallett (ed.), *Thomas Hardy: Texts and Contexts* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 156–79, who argues that Hardy challenges biology as all-determining (pp. 170–1). In other cases this is true, but in his representations of the workings of heredity, and the dangers of cousin marriages, in this novel, Hardy seems to enter a new key.
36. Maudsley, 'Heredity in Health and Disease', 654.
37. For an excellent study of eugenics and fiction at the *fin de siècle*, see Angelique Richardson, *Love and Eugenics in the Late Nineteenth Century: Rational Reproduction and the New Woman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
38. Emma F. Brooke, *A Superfluous Woman*, 3 vols. (London: William Heineman, 1894), iii. 84.
39. *Ibid.* 94.
40. *Ibid.* 104.
41. *A Superfluous Woman* was swiftly reprinted in a one-volume edition in that same year, and carried a selection of seventeen favourable reviews as a frontispiece, including the *Spectator*, 'a spark of genius'; the *Academy*, 'it would be unfair not to add that it is to a great extent a story that deserves its popularity'; and the *Review of Reviews*, 'the anonymous author presents primal passion, unencumbered of the trappings of shame and habit, with a simplicity and directness unequalled in recent English fiction'.
42. Strahan, 'The Propagation of Insanity', 335.
43. Maudsley, 'Heredity in Health and Disease', 656.
44. Clouston, *Clinical Lectures on Mental Diseases* (1883), 623: 'But what are we to say about the marriage of the neurotic, thin, hysterical young women, with insanity in their ancestry? We know they will not make good or safe mothers. Therefore, in them we ought to discourage marriage.' See also Henry Maudsley, *Responsibility in Mental Disease* (London: Henry S. King, 1874), 281, on the tendency to intensification of the neurotic type.
45. Clouston, *Clinical Lectures*, 528. The most famous intervention in this debate was Maudsley's essay 'Sex in Mind and in Education' (1874), which evoked a strong reply from Elizabeth Garrett Anderson in the following number of the *Fortnightly Review*. Hardy, in his postscript to the novel for the 1912 Wessex Edition, famously notes that a German reviewer had identified Sue as the first delineation in fiction of 'the slight, pale "bachelor" girl—the intellectualized, emancipated bundle of nerves that modern conditions were producing, mainly

in cities as yet' (p. xxxviii). Although noncommittal in response, he does not reject the idea, but rather concentrates on his haziness as to dates.

46. For an account of Hardy's visit to the asylum with Clifford Allbutt, a leading medical writer and Commissioner of Lunacy, see Michael Millgate, *Thomas Hardy: A Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 315. His discussions with Allbutt, Crichton Browne, and others are noted in Florence Emily Hardy, *The Life of Thomas Hardy*, 254. Clifford Allbutt was a voice of relative sanity amidst the late-century obsession with the increasing stresses of modern life and the corresponding mental decay. He does, however, believe that child suicide occurs with relative frequency where there is a predisposition in the family. See 'Nervous Diseases and Modern Life', *Contemporary Review*, 67 (1895), 210–31 at 213.
47. MS letter, 16 Nov. 1892; Dorset County Museum.
48. *The Times*, 18 May 1891, p. 9, col. d: 'A BOY HANGED—At Bodmin on Saturday evening, Thomas Norsham, aged 14, a grocer's assistant was found in a cellar by a child who told its parent that "Tommy was playing at hanging and would not speak". The lad had hanged himself in the doorway of the apartment, to which he had been sent to fetch candles.'
49. See e.g. 'Suicide amongst Children', 296–9; Forbes Winslow, *The Anatomy of Suicide*, 269; 'The "Daily Telegraph" on Suicide', *Journal of Psychological Medicine and Mental Pathology*, 17 (1860), pp. lxxii–lxxiii. In one case a 12-year-old son of a 'respectable artisan' had drowned himself after receiving a blow for not fulfilling an errand properly. His note, which is prefaced by a poetic couplet, would have confirmed the theories of those who argued that suicide increased with the spread of education:

'Art thou gone? Shall thy steps on the green hills no more  
Give the echoes of music that charmed us before?'

Beneath this couplet the deceased had written—'I am going to drown myself, so that you must go the canal, and you will find me there;—it is for you hitting me. GEORGE HERBERT BEARDSHAW'

'Singular Case of Suicide', *Journal of Psychological Medicine and Mental Pathology*, 9 (1856), pp. lxix–lxx.

50. *Letters*, i. 235 [May 1891?].
51. *Literary Notebooks*, ed. Björk, ii, n. 1888; E. A. Ross, 'Turning towards Nirvana', *Arena*, Nov. 1891.
52. Hardy took notes from an article in the *Contemporary Review*, 68 (Jan. 1893), on 'Pessimism and Progress' (labelled by Hardy 'Revd S. A. Alexander on The Decline of Pessimism') in which he observes that 'In philosophy Schopenhauer has given place to Hegel—the hope of cosmic suicide to the thought of a spiritual society'. Hardy's comment is 'comforting but false' (*Literary Notebooks*, ed. Björk, ii, n. 1908).
53. See Arthur Schopenhauer, *Studies in Pessimism: A Series of Essays*, selected and trans. T. Bailey Saunders (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1891), 48. The

- translator notes: 'According to Schopenhauer, moral freedom—the highest ethical aim—is to be obtained only by a denial of the will to live. Far from being a denial, suicide is an emphatic assertion of this will. For it is in fleeing from the pleasures, not the sufferings of life, that this denial exists' (p. 48).
54. Schopenhauer, *Studies in Pessimism*, 96–7. For Hardy's notes on this section of the book see *Literary Notebooks*, ed. Björk, ii, nn. 1797–9.
  55. Henry Maudsley, *Responsibility in Mental Disease*, 272.
  56. See Westcott, *Suicide*, 112, and Morselli, *Suicide*, 224.
  57. Marie Corelli, *The Mighty Atom* (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1896), 310.
  58. The Professor, brought in to tutor the child, was thinking of espousing a 'Christ-scorning female, with short hair and spectacles, who had taken high honours at Girton, and who was eminently fitted to become the mother of a brood of atheists, who, like human cormorants, would be prepared to swallow benefits and deny the benefactor' (p. 163). The Professor is a form of Dr Benjulia who comes to see the error of his ways: 'He who had frequently witnessed the ruthless vivisection of innocent animals. . . . was at last touched in the innermost recesses of his heart by the troubles of a child' (*ibid.* 243).
  59. *Ibid.* 9.
  60. *Ibid.* 315, 324, 330.
  61. Edmund Gosse exclaimed in his *Cosmopolis* review: 'What has Providence done to Mr Hardy that he should rise up in the arable land of Wessex and shake his fist at the Creator?' *Critical Heritage*, ed. Cox, 269.
  62. Agnes Grove was to step into the place of literary pupil/collaborator recently vacated by Florence Henniker.
  63. *Letters*, ii. 101. To Agnes Grove, 20 Dec. 1895.
  64. See *ibid.* 114–24.
  65. Mrs Walter Grove, 'Our Children: What Children Should be Told', *Free Review*, 6 (1896), 393–99 at 398. The article provoked a debate, with Henry Mansell responding with 'What Children Should Be Told', *ibid.* 535–40, George Macmillan with 'Shall We Deceive our Children', *Free Review*, 7 (1897), 170–8, and Dora Langlois, 'Shall We Deceive our Children', *ibid.* 426–32. Agnes responded with a letter (signing herself now Agnes Grove), in which she reiterated her belief that honesty with reference to religion and physiology went hand in hand, although she demurred at introducing children to the facts of life as early as possible, suggesting that as girls were not sent away to boarding schools, the mother could delay their enlightenment with regard to sex; *Free Review*, 7, pp. 433–4.
  66. Wynn Westcott, *Suicide*, 92. He particularly singles out Mary Elizabeth Bradon's novels: 'In "Aurora Floyd" and "Lady Audley's Secret", two novels of high standing, suicide is suggested definitely as a remedy for trouble, at least twelve times.'
  67. *The Guardian*, 4 July 1894, p. 1045.

## CONCLUSION

1. H. Taine, 'M. Taine on the Acquisition of Language by Children', 258.
2. James Crichton Browne, *On Dreamy Mental States. The Cavendish Lecture, Delivered before the West London Medico-Chirurgical Society, on Thursday, June 20, 1895* (London: Baillière, Tindall and Cox, 1895), 6.
3. Thomas Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, ed. Ingham, 17–18.
4. Crichton Browne, *On Dreamy Mental States*, 8, and a detailed case history, 16–20. One of Crichton Browne's case studies is that of J. A. Symonds, drawn from his own writing. Where others found evidence of 'meditativeness and introspection', Crichton Browne found disease. His life was, he agrees, 'a great spiritual tragedy' but it was so 'because his highest nerve centres were in some degree enfeebled and damaged by these dreamy mental states which afflicted him so grievously' (pp. 28–9).
5. Sully, *Studies of Childhood*, 9.
6. W. B. Drummond, *An Introduction to Child Study* (London: Edward Arnold, 1907), 4.
7. Clifford Siskin, *The Historicity of Romantic Discourse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 3. Quoted in Alan Richardson, *Literature, Education, and Romanticism*, 62.
8. Ellen Key, *The Century of the Child* (New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1909). The text was first published in Swedish in 1900. For a short discussion of the life and work of Ellen Key see Thorbjörn Lengborn, 'Ellen Key (1849–1926)', *Prospects: The Quarterly Review of Comparative Education*, 23 (1993), 825–37.
9. Sutton, 'Children and Modern Literature' (1892), 507.
10. The history of this movement has been told many times. See e.g. Ivy Pinchbeck and Margaret Hewitt, *Children in English Society, ii: From the Eighteenth Century to the Children Act 1948* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), chs. 20, 21; Harry Hendrick, *Child Welfare: England, 1872–1989*, Part II; Hugh Cunningham, 'The Rights of the Child from the Mid-Eighteenth to the Early Twentieth Century'. For an excellent, highly partisan, contemporary account of the legal changes see W. Clarke Hall, *The Queen's Reign for Children* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1897), which has an introduction by Benjamin Waugh.
11. See Hendrick, *Child Welfare*, 27; Hugh Cunningham, *The Children of the Poor: Representations of Childhood since the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), ch. 5; Brian V. Street, *The Savage in Literature: Representations of 'Primitive' Society in English Fiction 1858–1920* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975).
12. Cunningham, 'The Rights of the Child', 12–13.
13. Key, *Century of the Child*, 33.
14. *Ibid.* 46.
15. Angélique Richardson. in *Love and Eugenics in the Late Nineteenth Century*, has shown how even radical feminists in the New Woman movement at the end of the 19th c., which included many prominent female novelists such as Sarah

Grand and George Egerton, subscribed to forms of eugenicist thought. Key is not featured in the book.

16. Key, *Century of the Child*, 103.
17. Ibid. 130. F. Anstey's popular novel, *Vice Versa or a Lesson to Fathers* (1882), had taken this idea as its premiss: a tyrannical father, who insists that his son should return to school, is forced to inhabit the body of his son and return to school in his place. The primary emphasis is comic, however.
18. Key, *Century of the Child*, 140, Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss*, 66.
19. Key, *Century of the Child*, 140. Martineau, *Household Education*, 90. Martineau's depiction of her childhood fears was reworked for her autobiography of 1877, where she also recounted her 'unbounded need of approbation and affection', her 'devouring passion for justice', and her 'haunting, wretched, useless remorse'; *Harriet Martineau's Autobiography*, i. 15–16, 19, 18, 28.
20. Key, *Century of the Child*, 185–90. Further references are given in the text.
21. According to Leonard Shengold, the term 'soul murder' was first used in 1832 with reference to the discovery of the 'wild child' Kasper Hauser; see Leonard Shengold, *Soul Murder: The Effects of Childhood Abuse and Deprivation* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1991).
22. 'Why are children so unhappy', *The Independent*, 11 Mar. 2008, pp. 1–2.
23. See *The Times*, 8 Feb. 2008: 'English Children "are most tested in the world": English children are tested longer, harder and younger than anywhere else in the world, according to an influential report that compares school standards in 22 countries. Primary schools in England are obsessed with tests and put pupils through "pervasive" assessment, according to researchers from the Cambridge University-led Primary Review.' See <<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/education/article3330575.ece>> (accessed 15 Nov. 2009). More recently there were outcries when it was announced by the government that a new curriculum would be introduced for the under fives, 'Schools in revolt over under-5s curriculum'; see *The Times*, 26 May 2008, <[http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life\\_and\\_style/education/article4004420.ece](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life_and_style/education/article4004420.ece)> (accessed 15 Nov. 2009).
24. *The Times* article of 19 Feb. 2008 gives a summary in 'Bridgend, suicide and the internet: the facts', see <<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/article3399528.ece>> (accessed 15 Nov. 2009). *The Independent* article 'Why are children so unhappy' drew on details of the suicides, a 2007 report by UNICEF which showed that British children were the unhappiest of the twenty-one countries in the Western world within the survey, together with the Cambridge-led report on primary education and 'An Inquiry into Testing and Assessment by the National Association of Head Teachers'.
25. Linda A. Pollack, *Forgotten Children: Parent-Child Relations from 1500-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
26. Hall, *Adolescence* (1905), ii. 649.
27. Ibid., i, p. xiv.

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